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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

EDITED BY
LORD GORELL



AUGUST
1935

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BOOK NOTES FOR AUGUST

Adventures in Palestine

AMONG the many interesting books which are to come from John Murray in the early autumn is *Galilee Galloper*, by Douglas V. Duff. Readers of the CORNHILL will recollect Mr. Duff as being a frequent contributor, and also call to mind his most successful and exciting book, *Sword for Hire*, which was published last year and dealt with its author's own adventures. This new book is written around the remarkable exploits in the Palestine Police of a friend of his who is popularly known as "Abu George." Many choice stories are woven in the history of this most enterprising and intrepid man, and his success, in his official capacity, is due not only to his courage and determination in the face of dangers when a man's life is of small concern, but also to a singular understanding of the various sects of highly passionate peoples who are gradually being assimilated into the social and political structure of the Holy Land.



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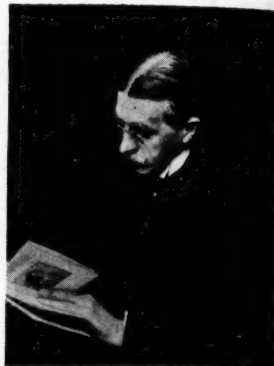
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BOOK NOTES FOR AUGUST

Memorial to a Critic

THE death of John Bailey, man of letters, historian, and politician, in 1931, was a loss to literature of a man who was rare in any age, and more particularly in an age where volume and speed of output seem to be the lights whereby the majority of writers are guided. There was a mellowness and distinction about him which came from a comprehensive and unprejudiced mind and a painstaking care in the doing of all things as well as possible. Those who knew him will not need to be reminded of his charm nor of the fascination of his conversation. He was a friend of all the most distinguished men of his time and in *John Bailey, 1864-1931, Letters and Diaries*, which is to appear in the early autumn under the Editorship of his wife, are many delightfully told anecdotes and recollections of famous people, together with the author's remarks and thoughts on places, happenings, books and all the thousand and one things that are of interest to an alert and distinguished mind.



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The History of a Hospital

THE growth of the medical service is always of interest, particularly when it is illustrated in the founding and growth of an institution. *The Story of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, 1835-1935*, is full of interest. The Medical School was founded in 1835, but teaching in the Hospital began nearly a hundred years before, and the famous Hunter School of Anatomy in Great Windmill Street became virtually a school of Middlesex Hospital by reason of its proprietor, Sir Charles Bell, being chief surgeon to the Hospital. This book, in addition to telling the history of the School, tells of the famous men who have taught and worked there to alleviate human suffering.

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50 Albemarle St. W.

NEW YORK: THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS CO., 131 VARICK STREET, N.Y.
Published Monthly, price 1s. 6d. net. Annual Subscription, 20s., post free.
Entered as Second Class Matter March 15, 1929, at the Post Office, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.,
under the Act of March 3, 1879, (Sec. 397, P. L. and R.).

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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST 1935.

ICELAND.

II. IN PRACTICE.

BY F. L. LUCAS.

THE journey to Iceland, like its Sagas, alternates poetry with prose. On the July morning when we set out for Hull, even after months of drought—and years of motor traffic—beyond the towers of Peterborough the green spaciousness of Lincolnshire still stretched unspoilt into the north, shimmering under the heat-haze of an early summer's day. For the highways of East Lincolnshire have been largely saved from the grim hardening of most of England's arteries, thanks to that great gash hewn in the flank of Britain by the spear-head of the Humber, which severs all northward running roads to east of Gainsborough and Goole. And so the triple towers of Lincoln Minster still look from their proud hill-top over a countryside not greatly changed since little St. Hugh was laid by the altar to his rest—

'And a' the bells o' merry Lincoln
Without men's hands were rung;
And a' the books o' merry Lincoln
Were read without man's tongue;
And never was such a burial
Sin' Adam's day begun.'

But from the poetry of 'merry Lincoln' Hull brings an abrupt descent to prose. At a drab dockside, with a hinterland of slum, lay loading the s.s. *Godafoss*. Its mere two thousand tons looked dismayingly small; but that evening the sea itself lay as flat as the long low coast, when at last we had crawled out of dock, dropped our pilot at Humbersmouth, and swung round Spurn Head towards the grey haze of the north. Westward a great black bastion of cloud, its pinnacles on fire with the sunset, hid with its brooding darkness the drouth of England.

Our company of pilgrims would have amused Chaucer. They seemed an epitome of this motley modern world on which we were turning our backs for five weeks to come. Even here the War pursued us, in the shape of a tall, crop-headed, sallow and melancholy

German Major, whose pouchy eyes and protruding neck suggested some sad and many-summered tortoise, with a heavier load upon his back than he could bear. The flames of long-forgotten bombardments seemed still to smoulder in those moody eyes, as he stared at the cabin tablecloth or paced the deck, field-glasses in hand; ever and again sweeping the horizon, as if in search of the lost fleet of Germany. The gloom of his meditations was only at moments brightened by the sight of the cherished son of twelve or so, whom he was rearing as an infant Hannibal. One evening a few of the younger passengers were dancing to a gramophone on a corner of the narrow deck. 'The young don't do that in Germany,' he said sombrely. He seemed one of the dead of the Western Front, come back to look for more.

Hitler's Germany was also represented by two corpulent and opulent Jews, who exchanged somewhat frigid salutations with the Major. Dealers in antiques, so we were told, they had somehow contrived to square the Aryan oppressor and escape for a trip to Iceland; and were combining business with pleasure, by bringing with them a consignment of Persian rugs to unload on the rich of Reykjavik.

A pleasant contrast to this German contingent, and a typical example of the wealth, health, and spirits with which the upper classes of Great Britain, by knack or luck, emerge from the greatest wars, was provided by a couple of calmly amused young women, one English, one Anglo-Irish, who came on board looking as if they had just dismounted from their hunters. They were bent on fishing and bird-gazing in Iceland; as a stepping-stone, in some future summer, to the amenities of Greenland. And the traditional eccentricities of England were represented by a rather pathetic and elderly figure, like a retired grocer, in shabby clothes set off with spats, who shuffled about the ship with an air between forlornness and profundity and amused himself by putting Socratic questions to the young Icelanders of either sex on board—'Now tell me, what do you know? Do you know anything?' Stupefied silence. 'Do you know the sun'll rise to-morrow?' They modestly thought they might go so far as that. 'Ah, but it won't! It doesn't *rise*!' When they had recovered enough to ask politely in their turn, as well they might, what he was proposing to do in Iceland, he would reply mysteriously, 'Buy it.' He reappeared on the return voyage, looking more pathetic than ever; but with no sign of Iceland in his pocket.

This Babel was completed by a learned Dutch professor, crammed with Sagas and fascinated by Iceland into making this his fifth visit, at the head of a consignment of Dutch students of both sexes for work on the farms; a charming Danish attaché and his wife from the Legation in London; and various young Icelanders homeward bound from the Old World and the New.

July 11, evening. Hardly a glimpse of land in the twenty-four hours since leaving Hull—only the elbow of Scotland by Peterhead and then, a few hours later, the headland of Duncansby, the N.E. tip of Great Britain; in the dusk a lighthouse high on the desolate cliff was beginning to sweep the grey horizon where the North Sea meets the Pentland Firth and the roll of the North Atlantic. To the right the dark outlines of the Orkneys loomed through the twilight, guarding Scapa Flow. Most of the time, nothing but sea and sky; with sometimes a little lonely trawler tossing across the grey wilderness, or some seabird still lonelier, flying straight onward between the two infinities of wave and cloud. In the thickening darkness we missed Sule Skerry, where dwelt the Great Silkie of the Ballad.¹

July 13. Each day the sunsets become more unearthly, as they shift farther to the north, and the nights grow lighter. This evening transformed the Atlantic rollers to molten green metal, in a furnace wide as the world; with the last sunlight making patches of wrinkled golden slag on their backs as they heaved past, until the whole sweep of the sea seemed like the scaly corrugated skin of the Midgard Serpent, risen from the depths below, where he sleeps till the Twilight of the Gods. Long after the sun has vanished to creep his short journey behind the hillock of the Pole, the sky burns on with pale reds and yellows; as if from the reflected glare of some unknown land on fire beyond the sea's northern rim.

¹ *Silkie*, seal. He has a child by a mortal maid.

'I am a man upo' the lan',
An' I am a silkie in the sea;
And when I'm far and far frae lan',
My dwelling is in Sule Skerrie . . .

An' it sall pass on a simmer's day,
When the sin shines het on evera stane,
That I will tak my little young son,
An' teach him for to swim his lane.

An' thu sall marry a proud gunner,
An' a proud gunner I'm sure he'll be,
An' the very first schot that ere he schoots,
He'll schoot baith my young son and me.'

July 14. Late last night from the grey bank of ragged storm-clouds along the horizon there rose up, far away, like the dark heads of giants, the first of the Iceland Jökulls. At two this morning our siren blew, like Childe Roland's 'slug-horn' at the gate of the Dark Tower; it was an unforgettable moment, to come on deck in the pallid glimmer of that Purgatorial twilight and find rising all round the ship, fantastic as if they had really been the portal of some Netherworld, the Westman Isles—great ramparts of cliff falling sheer to a land-locked sea and crowned by slopes of grass mounting almost as steeply, like the roofs of a medieval château, to meet the sky. Their base was white with the breakers; their sides, with the agelong droppings of the seabirds. Not even the first sight from the Ionian Sea of the cloud-raked mountains of Epirus at the gates of Greece makes so overwhelming an entrance to an unknown land.

As if these gaunt rock-pinnacles in the twilight really had been that Shore of the Dead reached by Odysseus in the dimness of the Western Sea, there now appeared a spectral craft. But as it drew closer, it turned from Charon's barge to a tub-shaped motor-boat, chugging towards us with goods and passengers from the little quay—among them some young women dressed in the most up-to-date fashion. It brought back memories of watching a Greek country-girl toiling *in high heels* up the rugged headland of Trikeri, itself hardly changed since Argo landed there. For other deities may die or vanish before the march of science; but She whose favourite shrine was once Paphos, and is now Paris, grows only more powerful. To-day in a twinkling of her eye the women of two hemispheres are instantaneously transformed. Even summer and winter, day and night, can only cover half the globe at a time; but the Fashions of the modern Aphrodite with a single gesture girdle the whole earth.

Seen by broad daylight on the homeward voyage the Westman Isles remained hardly less striking, though their livid cliffs had now turned to tawny and their steep gables of grass to the vividdest of acid greens. As in space, so in time, they stand on the threshold of the Icelandic world, linked with the memory of the two earliest settlers, Hjorlief and Ingolf. Hjorlief's Irish thralls ('Westmen'), being forced to drag his plough, rebelled and killed their master, then took refuge here, where Ingolf, hearing of his comrade's death, pursued and hunted them down. Thence the name of 'Westman Isles.' A man-hunt no less grim took place early in the seventeenth century, when the whole population was massacred or carried off to slavery by corsairs from far-off Algiers.

Ten hours from the Westman Islands, after rounding Cape

Reykjanes (which crawls down in its black crumpled skin of lava, like some vast prehistoric lizard, to shelter in the sea, with no sign of life amid its wilderness but a portly white lighthouse), there comes in sight the place of Ingolf's own landtake; where the high-seat pillars from his hall, flung overboard to give him magic guidance, drifted ashore on the site of the future capital. A universal grey is the first impression of Reykjavik—grey clouds trailing along grey, whale-backed fells behind a grey-walled town of Presbyterian primness. But the primness is only a first impression. The silks and powders of Paris walk even these Arctic streets; even here two cinemas exhibit, with nonchalant cosmopolitanism, pictures of Egypt or China, talked in American, with captions in Danish. As the Heavens for Sigurd the Priest, so the earth for us, grows 'small as a calfskin'; and not always more intelligent.

This strange mingle of ancient and modern, of sophistication and simplicity, recurs at every step throughout Iceland. In the very act of descending the gangway, the traveller finds himself face to face on the quay with great stacks of bottles in boxes, proudly inscribed 'Egil Skallagrimsson'; poorly as the hero of that violent Saga would have thought of a name writ in mineral-water, or of 'the bubble, Reputation' compressed in gassy lemonade. Yet the modern Iclander still cleaves to the old names and the old system of patronymics. Surnames are too newfangled for him; and so the children of, say, Kiartan Olafsson are still called — Kiartansson or — Kiartansdottir. Reykjavik itself, with its mushroom growths of concrete and corrugated iron and not an ancient building in it, honours none the less faithfully the memory of old Ingolf with a modernistic statue, by Einar Jonsson, set up in its main square; and plans to central-heat itself in most up-to-date fashion by boring down to the springs below it boiling with the earth's primeval heat. The same contrasts continue through the countryside. Along the fifty kilometres of road to Thingvellir, where by the great prehistoric lava-rift the first of Parliaments met a thousand years ago, whole processions of shining automobiles now stream out to a little inn that still christens itself by the heathen name of 'Valhalla.' Venture a little farther afield and you find the few roads dwindling to rocky bridle-tracks, along which heroic American cars pound and bump their sometimes literally seasick passengers. In lonely corners of mist-hung glens, famous for some grapple of berserks nine centuries ago, to-day there suddenly rise out of the desolation, glaring mutual defiance in their red and green armour, the rival petrol-pumps of

'Shell' and 'B.P.' Farms lost in labyrinths of green morass, almost unapproachable on foot or wheels or in any way but on horse-back, are yet equipped with telephone and wireless. As we supped at the kindly table of Magnus Gudmundsson, the priest of Ólafsvík, of whom we had just claimed the wandering stranger's right of hospitality, as if in the days of Abraham, suddenly a voice cried out of the ether above our heads that a battle was raging in 'Vina-borg' and one Dolfuss had just been murdered. Or again at gaunt Stóraholt on the neck of Iceland, as we waited in a bleak room, tired, wet, and wondering if there would be anything to eat, all at once the chill air began to vibrate consolingly with Haydn's *Surprise Symphony*. On the lifeless moorland between Hjarðarholt and Laugar, across which Kiartan Olafsson used to ride to woo Gudrun, suddenly in the distance a netted enclosure caught our eyes, with black shapes inside it, skipping and gibbering like imprisoned hobgoblins—Icelandic and silver foxes being scientifically bred for their fur.

In this strange partnership of old and new the past may be doomed gradually to lose ground; but it maintains a tough resistance. The picturesque wood-and-turf farmhouses of other days, looking as if they had grown green fur to withstand the northern winter, have indeed yielded, almost everywhere, to cement and corrugated iron; but every farmhand still knows his Sagas, as few English labourers would dream of knowing the history of their neighbourhood. At Gunnar's Lithend, when we asked the way to the hero's grave, a daughter of the farm who had just travelled out in the same car from Reykjavík, made nothing of scaling a steep hillside in her town clothes and shoes for ten minutes, to show us that green and lonely barrow. Gunnar still mattered. And each Sunday, though most of the churches are newly built of tin, the priest himself arrives in black cassock and white starched ruff, like a Reformation portrait come to life; though even here modernity reasserts itself and the whole costume is incongruously crowned by a bowler-hat.

Again, though the capital has now swallowed half of the scanty hundred thousand that inhabit this country larger than Ireland, most of the remainder still live scattered about the wilderness in the same self-reliant isolation as their forefathers—not huddled in villages like the modern Sicilians, for example, who spend a large part of their lives drowsing on donkey-back between the hilltops they inhabit and the fields they till; they imitate instead the Cyclopes of Homer's Sicily, dwelling each by his lonely hearth and

not meddling one with another. In consequence they remain, not town-minded like most of modern Europe, yet in touch by books and wireless with the world; not richly blessed with either goods or sunlight, yet tall and healthy in spite of it. The old violence is gone; but they still keep the calm, the restraint, the reticence of the Sagas, and their force of hidden feeling. It was fascinating to watch the countryfolk dancing on Sunday evening at Thingvellir. The young women, as usual now outside the capital, wore trousers or plus-fours (regardless of the fate of Aud in the *Laxdaela Saga*, who in accordance with old Icelandic law was divorced for donning men's breeches). Their faces were as impassive as masks; yet they danced like a cavalry charge, to the strains of a concertina played with such vehemence that it seemed bound to burst. With equal calm various small children wandered about the hall in the midst of this mêlée, colliding with couple after couple; yet they drew from the dancers not a word, not a flicker, of irritation—the intruders were just gently pushed aside. And each time the musician's muscles gave out, it was with judicial solemnity that the partners bowed to each other, as they took their seats again.

It proved the same everywhere. No country on earth can produce less fuss per square mile. At first this phlegm can be a little disconcerting. As evening slowly descends on black mountain and green bog and the deserts of the Iceland sky grow yet more desolate in the grey half-light overhead, you turn to some homestead that has looked likely on the map, to beg for shelter. The door opens; cold eyes look you up and down; you may even be questioned on the doorstep, with an icy wind searching your wet clothes. What are you doing?—Walking to see the Sagasteads! 'How improbable!' say those stolid eyes. Even when the hoped-for nod of assent has been given, you may still be left sitting in an empty, fireless room, with no sign of bed or board. And yet, while your spirits slowly sink to the zero of your feet, out of sight your supper is being prepared, your bed made; and before you drop thankfully into it, the stiff aloofness will have thawed and you will confess once more that there could be no race kindlier nor more hospitable.

This same imperturbability of the far North produces a leisurely indifference to time and punctuality worthy of the Orient. Horses promised at nine will be nowhere in sight at eleven. A public 'bus with a long day's journey before it will indulgently wait a good half-hour at the gate of some intending passenger who has only just

risen from his bed, though the hour of departure is long past; the offender finishes his breakfast, packs, kisses his wife, and at last descends his door-steps without any sign of embarrassment on his part, or of impatience from his fellow-travellers; at most one of them will have tooted the horn at intervals in mild expostulation.

Even comfort is not thought to be worth much trouble. More ground could be reclaimed, more trees and flowers grown. The farm of Mulakot by Lithend, which has a flower-garden and even strawberries that ripen in August, together with a little grove of trees bearing, like strange fruit, coloured electric lamps lighted from the neighbouring torrent, remains a rare example of what might be done. But why bother? Even mental exertion about such things is troublesome. Instead of sandwiches we found ourselves given single pieces of bread-and-butter, each protected by a covering of transparent paper; which, when removed, naturally secured for itself the lion's share of the butter. We tried to explain that the pieces of bread-and-butter would be far happier face to face. We found our wish carried out—but with *two* pieces of paper inserted between! Even the native flies are so nonchalant that they have to be killed on one's face. They will not budge for mere gestures. An Icelandic fly is not so cowardly. It dies where it sits.

In the same way the old practical, unmystical attitude to religion still persists. The Icelandic pastor, so venerably antique in his Sunday attire, becomes on Monday morning a healthy farmer in mufti, working vigorously on his land, which is often the most prosperous in the neighbourhood. Perhaps—last vestige of his Sabbath glory—you may see a black bowler-hat bobbing among the yellow haycocks. His wireless aerial is attached, without any fear of fire from heaven, to the tin tower of his little church. On his shelves lie a few religious works, cheek by jowl with the inevitable pagan Sagas. Except for one sad ascetic, all the priests we saw—and we learnt by experience to make, if possible, for the nearest parsonage at nightfall—seemed as happy and busy as they were kindly. 'Are you not lonely, though?'—'Ah, no, we have the wireless, you see—and the telephone—and once a year we go to Reykjavik!'

But the old imaginativeness is also alive. One day the flashy bubbings of modern fiction may oust the Sagas—but as yet, in the country, there seemed no danger of it. True, this knowledge of the past was not always perfect. 'Ah,' said an Icelander, when our Irish fellow-passenger revealed her nationality, 'then we are

kin—all Icelanders, you know, are descended from the Irish monks that settled here.' (Irish monks did by some miracle reach Iceland in their open boats, even before the Norsemen ; but withdrew again before the heathen new-comers. However, the remark may have been more Voltairean and less simple than it looked.)

Typical was our visit to Bergthórshvoll, the most famous Sagastead in Iceland, once the scene of Njál's burning, now a priest's house. After a circuitous and bumpy journey across the flat pastures of the Austur Landeyjar, our car jolted to rest on the opposite river-bank half a mile from the house. The ponies that should have met us were of course nowhere to be seen ; after shouting in vain, we waded the stony ford barefoot, just in time to meet them jogging comfortably out of the gate of the homestead. But nothing mattered in the perfect peace of an evening that was beginning to smooth with its level light the great green flats beside the sea and, beyond, like miraculous blue icebergs, the crags of the Westman Isles ; deepening the distant azure of the great semi-circular ring of mountains to the north—Skálafell, Ingólfssjall, Kálfstindar, Hekla, and Three-Corner (beneath which the Burners gathered for their enterprise) ; and turning soft grey the mists that quilted the long eastward snowfield of the Eyjafjallajökull. In the bright-green homestead, below the knoll that gave the spot its name, they were making the hay as in the days of Njál, a thousand years ago ; and an old carle, bald, brown-bearded, and blue-eyed, dropped his rake to show us the hollow where the Burners hid ; the way that Kari, the one survivor and destined avenger, fled screened by the smoke ; the place where he quenched his burning clothes. And when we went indoors, past a bow hanging on the wall, to the hospitality of cakes and milk, he began reading out to us with eager excitement parts of the sacred tale.

It is, indeed, as if the land itself were faithful to its dead ; still unspoiled and unchanged from what it was to their eyes. The same hot springs steam for ever in the hollows of the hills ; the same columns of colder vapour hang above the giant waterfalls that shake the gorges with the earthquake of their onrush from the wilderness to the sea—Godafoss and Dettifoss, Brúarfoss with its ice-blue waters, Gullfoss that the sun of afternoon makes glorious with the golden colour of its name. Still, as for centuries, the same soft-eyed, courageous, uncomplaining little horses carry their heavy masters all day long, without more than a few mouthfuls of rare grass ; toiling up the jagged lava-track, threading with dainty

caution the green treachery of the morass, groping and stumbling through the roar of glacier-torrents whose muddy-grey welter hides so many false footholds and deadly holes. Still the great plover of the moorland wheels and circles hoarsely barking about the way-farer, inquisitive as if it had never seen shape of man before ; along the desolate beaches brown eider-ducks and drakes with all their downy offspring rise before the intruder from their nests of brown seaweed and toddle in sedate family-procession to the sea ; grotesque puffins, red in face and foot, skim the wave-crests, looking like flying moles in muzzles ; two and two the wild swans, in their white and lonely dignity, sail slowly across sea-firth or mountain-tarn ; and the screaming skua swoops hatefully down-wind, like a great brown bomber, screaming at the rider who dares approach its nest on that grey battlefield of stones, into which Markfleet has turned and is still turning the meadows of Lithend.

This sense of a sad and changeless eternity presses more insistently than ever on the belated wanderer under the white summer-night which hangs in heaven, for ever about to fall, yet never falling, as hour by hour the slow after-glow of the sunset steals among the Arctic horizon to become imperceptibly the first light of dawn. But at all times of the day the Iceland sky can be as dreamily magical as that of Atlantic Ireland, with its softly shifting pageantry of blue fissures and white peaks of cumulus, dappled with inlets of dove-grey.

Only one ancient feature of the land is deeply changed. The woodland trees are gone. Only a few lonely survivors still cling here and there to some glacier-guarded hollow of the mountains, like Thorsmjörk below Eyjafell, or to some river islet unapproachable by man ; scattered clumps of degenerate dwarf-birch lurk among the moors ; and in the north, between Akureyri and Mývatn an actual birch-wood, twenty to twenty-five feet high, still recalls the forests of the Saga-folk and provides their posterity with a marvel of nature so extraordinary that tourist-cars stop twenty minutes to do it justice.

To see the Saga-sites of the west and north, after those of the south-west such as Thingvellir, Lithend, Bergthórshvöll, and to make that first-hand acquaintance with a country that can best be gained by footing it (though walkers are so rare in Iceland that ponies used to shy at us), we set out a second time from Reykjavik.

July 23. Left at 8 in car crammed with 14. By the coast-

road round the flank of Esja down to Whalefirth, the scene of the *Holm-dwellers' Saga*. Geirshólmi, their stronghold, turned out to be a tiny pillar of rock rising sheer from the firth and looking as if its top could hardly accommodate a dozen sheep. Yet there the outlaws held out for years, harrying the coast-farmers and, by agreed custom, pitching over their precipice into the sea any member of the band who was so effeminate as to be ill for more than three days. The 'road' for the twenty miles up one side of the firth and down the other was such an indescribable chaos of quags and boulders, that much of it could not be covered at more than four miles an hour and some of the seasick passengers would hardly have resisted being pitched into the sea themselves—as at moments seemed not unlikely to occur. Got out at Ferjukot to walk to Borg. A senile old man at the farm allowed us to take a short cut marked on the map, which led into an impassable arm of the sea. Tried in vain to ford it in three places and floundered for three-quarters of an hour through a swamp back to the road. After two hours of dullish highway had a lift from a lorry, charmingly decked with dwarf-birch branches. Found the legendary grave of Kiartan Olafsson in the churchyard of Borg—an immensely long green mound, lying north and south; not east and west like the other graves. The stone covering it once, though said to have been much later in date, had vanished, they told us, to the Museum at Reykjavik. Here at Borg Kiartan set sail for Norway, leaving Gudrun; here he landed three years later to find she had married Bodli, his best friend; here he was buried after she had goaded that friend to kill him. We looked north towards the far-off, cloud-ridden peaks of Snaefellsnes, behind which Gudrun herself lies buried under Holyfell. They told us that the one house beside the church still stood on the site where in the tenth century Kiartan's mother's father, Egil Skallagrimsson, made his home. Behind it an outcrop of naturally castellated rock had clearly given rise to the name of 'Borg.' A heavy grey cloud-bank piled itself threateningly above the black volcanic slopes of the Hafnarfjall above the estuary, as we walked down to the peninsula of Borgarnes, a little ramshackle port with petrol-pumps and stacks of coal and a litter of decaying sheep's horns. The inn at least proved better than it looked.

July 24. Found, after some difficulty, a car going to Stykkishólmur on Snaefellsnes. The driver rather timid; whereas most of his kind are imperturbably competent. Fortunately the road was unusually easy, except for narrow bridges with curved approaches where we nearly jammed. Beyond Fagraskógarfjall, a haunt of Grettir's in his outlawry, the crater of Eldborg rose from the wild lava of the Eldborgarhraun, looking like a slice of lunar

landscape. Got out beyond the farm of Bakkatunga and set out to walk along Snaefellsnes. It was strangely lonesome in the evening light, with the mists slowly lifting and uncoiling from Snaefell itself, thirty miles ahead. At first we could not believe its rounded dome of snow was not itself a cupola of silver cloud. To our right the slow vapours curled and writhed about the volcanic peaks that make the black spine of Snaefellsnes. After three hours, at 8, reached the parsonage of Staðastadur. The door was opened by the parson in his shirt-sleeves, as astonished as an Iclander is capable of ever being. He asked us in; but it was terribly cold sitting in a fireless room for an hour and a half, just after fording a stream. At last, milk and *skyr* (solidified sour milk); hunger drove us brazenly to ask for more. Tolerable night, though the bed was narrow as a coffin; followed by a better breakfast, of coffee and biscuits. P. gave the priest's wan but charming wife hints for pruning the still more wan little roses she was trying to grow in a flower-pot by the window—an Ibsen-like symbol of that sad, though kindly, household.

July 25. A morning of real sun. Heavy going through alternate sand and bog along the shore. But the light was incredibly lovely, glinting in front on the snowfields of Snaefell, as on a swan's soft breast; and, on our left, shining right through the glassy-green translucency of the breaking waves, while a land-wind from the north whipped from their arched and shining necks white manes of spray. Strange how it recalled, despite all differences, another day of sunlit surf from the south, on the beach of Sicilian Selinunte with its broken marble columns white as the foam of that African sea. There were ruins here too, just like white column-drums, scattered along the shore; but these were vertebræ from the dorsal columns of dead whales. Lunch under the lee of an immense castaway buoy. Endless streams to ford by Ölkelda, where the track lost heart and gave up the ghost. Yet they say cars reach Ólafsvík! Good view of the pass that Bjorn used, crossing Snaefell to make love to Thurid, Snorri the Priest's sister, at Fródá, until he nearly perished in the blizzard her jealous husband got a witch to raise; finally Snorri drove him overseas, where years afterwards shipwrecked wanderers from Iceland found him grown a man of mark among an unknown race beyond the Atlantic and brought from him a last message to his old love in the north.

Climbed to the road towards the nearer pass of Löngubrekkur, and then up through fine rain and dense cloud over the *col*. Very tired, after eleven hours on the way, when we reached the house of Magnus Gudmundsson, the priest of Ólafsvík—a village pleasant enough to the eye from a distance, with its houses trailing along the shore between mountain and sea, as if in pursuit of the little

tin church at its far end, that seems leading the rest on a Pied-Piper's pilgrimage out into the deep; but less pleasant to the nose at close quarters, thanks to its drying fish.

July 26. Turned back eastwards, revived by a much more European night's entertainment; past the farm of Fródá, where once the dead drove the living from their own hall-fire. For each night the ghosts of the buried sat on one side of it and flung the mould from their winding-sheets at the ghosts of the drowned opposite; who retaliated by shaking back at them from their sodden clothes the salt drippings of the sea. Then by the neighbouring farms of Holt and Máfahlið, a mile apart, where lived the two rival witches of the *Ere-dwellers' Saga*; until she of Máfahlið got her enemy stoned to death, with a bag pulled over her head. Very peaceful the homesteads looked now; the only note of discord came from the clouds of gulls that wheeled above our heads, screaming shrill protests at our invasion of their sandy solitudes. On Búlandshöfði P.'s knee gave out. Turned back to Máfahlið for horses. August Olafsson was making his hay; but proved ready to forsake it for us. He led us in to wait while he caught his ponies somewhere up the fell. A captured falcon drooped, looking very sorry for itself, in his window; and his wife, all courtesy, brought us coffee and little cakes. After an interminable delay, the horses appeared and we started off round Búlandshöfði, a steep headland ill-reputed for its narrow track across a cliff-face high above the sea. William Morris records having nightmares about it beforehand; and would only cross on foot. But it proved a very mild affair; though the sight of the Arctic breakers showing their white fangs far below brought back the memory of the two thralls of Máfahlið in the Saga, who pitched themselves clean over here in panic-stricken flight after a local battle. Then on, past Kirkjufell, most fantastic of mountains, so thin as to suggest a notched oblong dish stood on one edge; round the shore of Grundarfjörður; and so by 8, with the ponies venting their exuberance at arrival in a last mad gallop, to the parsonage of Setberg, surrounded by a host of little haycocks, each covered with its little waistcoat of whitish tarpaulin. Marvellous luxury—two beds and a *bath*! The same unfailing hospitality; and a sunset of unearthly beauty beyond Krossnes.

July 26. P.'s leg too bad to walk; I almost too sore to ride. (Icelandic ponies do not expect the rider to rise in the saddle, but merely to bump, when the ground does allow them to trot at all; to the novice, after a day or two, the results are excruciating.) The priest found us horses. Over the Troll's Pass to the Berserks' Lava—an unbelievable desolation of jagged black slag and mountains like cinder-heaps, looking as if it had all only cooled yesterday. Hereabouts two Swedish berserks somehow made a road through

the lava, to win for one of them the hand of Asdis, daughter of Viga-styr, who did not dare refuse them point-blank ; when they had to his dismay performed their part of the bargain, by counsel of Snorri the Priest he invited them to a hot bath in his new bath-house, barred the door, and so boiled them. The ' ruins ' of the said bath-house a farmer pointed out to us. So to Holyfell, the sacred crag that shadows Snorri's home and Gudrun's grave—a green mound, outside the churchyard, and lying north and south like her lover's supposed resting-place at Borg. This, however, is said to be genuinely hers. It was bright with yellow meadow-flowers and blue wild forget-me-nots. Came very stiff and tired to Stykkishólmur, a little port that even boasts an inn.

July 27. Found motor-boat to take us up Hvammsfjörður to the mouth of Laxárdalur. Lovely at first, with bright sun, and islets swimming round in all directions, sometimes with a lonely white farm aboard, and puffins whisking flurriedly across the wave-tops, and the great wall of the Snaefellsnes mountains to the south. But beyond Skorravík it clouded and wind and sea got up ; never felt nearer drowning, with a very unconvincing old man at the tiller and two shivering apprentices. Ashore at last at Búdardalur, numb and drenched ; but with great expectations of bed and board at Hjardarholt, once Kiartan's home, now a farm that takes guests. But we found the master away in Reykjavík and were ruthlessly turned from his door by a churlish young lout of a neighbour, to straggle for an hour across a bog to the poorest farm we have yet been in. Bare, but surprisingly large room, considering what a turf hut the place had looked from outside ; horrible supper of red grout and of mutton that tasted so strongly of sheep as to butt one completely over. But clean beds, a kindly good-night smile from the old woman (the young one had been icily aloof), and another amazing sunset to go to bed by—a great carnation splash of blood across black cloud, high over Gudrun's home in Saelingsdale.

July 28. After coffee (not bad, though as usual done to death with chicory) turned our backs on Laxárdalur—a gentle valley, like Yorkshire—to cross a dreary moor in the face of north-east wind and rain. Headed for Laugar, where Gudrun was born, and Saelingsdalstunga, where she lived with Bodli and where Snorri the Priest died ; as at Thermopylæ, a boiling spring still marks unchangeably the scene of human passions long since cold. Now it feeds a lonely concrete swimming-bath ; a cavalcade of young girls rode past on their way to bathe in it. We turned north up Svínadalur, narrow, green, and lonely, where a boulder called the Kjartanssteinn records the supposed scene of his slaying ; and over the pass to Bessatunga, the home of sturdy old Bersi who carried off for a while Cormac's Steingerd. The whole glen, as we came down,

was hung with steamy vapours like a great bath. No parsonage, to our dismay, by the church of Staðarhólskirkja. But some passing riders directed us to the large farm of Stóraholt, where after a chilly reception we were surprised with the best supper for days.

Such are a few typical Icelandic travel-notes ; there is no need to pursue them further—across the duck's neck of Iceland to the north coast ; then along to the Akureyri road at Mel on Midfirth, Cormac the Poet's home. Like that dreamy lover, the valley itself has a strange softness for this distant north ; yet follow it a few miles up to Bjarg, the birthplace of Grettir, and it becomes savage again, with desolate moorlands stretching away towards the snows of Eiríksjökull, lost in the central desert. From Mel cars bump by way of Blönduós to Akureyri, the second town in Iceland ; and beyond it to Mývatn, 'Midge-water,' a volcano-girdled lake where the tormented traveller may console himself by recalling those lines of Spenser as lovely as its landscape—

'As when a swarme of Gnats at eventide
Out of the fennes of Allan doe arise,
Their murmuring small trumpets sounden wide,
Whiles in the aire their clustering army flies.'

But perhaps a veil would be even better.

From Akureyri it is simple to take the coast-voyage back to Reykjavík past the north-western promontories of Iceland, where for long years Gisli the Outlaw struggled in hunted loneliness, with the help of his wife Aud, truest of women ; and so from Reykjavík home.

Iceland is faithful to the memory of its dead ; and, in turn, its own memory roots itself deeper and deeper in the minds of those who have been there, long after their vessel has once more rounded Spurn Head and fallen into its place in that long procession of ships from every point of the North Sea heading up the great highway of the Humber. The myriad dance of the white bog-cotton across boundless wastes of green ; the black fangs of basalt streaked with snow, that ring the inner desert ; the majestic aloofness of those undarkening skies ; the uneffusive kindliness of a self-reliant race—at sudden moments, amid the fugitive bustle of civilised life, their quiet dignity comes back to the mind.

And yet—it is wiser not to claim too much—though the memories of Iceland return, they do not drag at the heart with the homesickness that the South can inspire. The Mediterranean—Provence,

Italy, Greece—these have their sun to throw into the scale. It is a formidable counterweight. The Iceland-sun in summer hardly sets; but for days it may be hardly seen either, blotted out behind endless armadas of grey vapour. Those gigantic waterfalls, though largely glacier-fed, make credible the assertion that it rains on three hundred days in the year. And from this lack of sun may come in part the lack of certain qualities in the life and early literature of Iceland—of gaiety, grace, lightness of touch. The Sagas can be great tragedy; but except in the *Tale of the Banded Men* their comic laughter is rare and grim. And though the women of Iceland are fond enough of finery, whether it be the old embroidered peasant-dress or the latest imitations of the Rue de la Paix (just as Saga-characters are often recorded to have been 'showy men'), apart from this there are few signs of any great feeling for visual beauty or art. In this cloudy Cimmeria the very butterflies are grey.

Sense the Iclander has in plenty; but, it would seem, a more limited sensibility. There exists some respectable modern sculpture; but it is her literature that has won Iceland distinction; and that literature contains no Ronsard, no La Fontaine. Thor has left his name stamped on iron glen and jökull; troll and giant have haunted these wildernesses; but how far away seems, for instance, the happy grace of Plato's Arcadia, as embodied in one of the most perfect of all Greek epigrams!—

'Hush, O wooded hill of the Dryads! Hush your leaping
Down from the rock, O fountains! Hush, myriad-bleating
ewes!
For along his oaten pipe now Pan himself is sweeping
His supple lip to waken the sweet cry of the Muse;
And with feet untired for dancing about him gathered gleam,
The Dryad from the forest, the Naiad from the stream.'

There dwell trolls, not dryads, in Iceland. Yet grace like theirs, so typical of Hellas, is one of the things that life can least afford to lose. For the Graces are goddesses of little things and of common days; like the poor, they can always be with us; and yet they are not poor. To many a riddle of the Sphinx the wisest answer is a smile; many a Gordian knot is best severed with a laugh. Greece and France have discovered that; and it makes theirs a still stronger magic. Calypso and Circe are of the South. The cold blue enchantments of the Westman Isles linger in the memory; but they lack the fascination of the pine-woods of Ægina, or the white walls of the

Cyclades. Apollo, said the old legend, visited the Hyperboreans ; but the Mediterranean has remained his home.

Yet visit them he did. And the imagination is the poorer that does not follow him ; whether or no it takes the body also in its train. In this factory-world, whose walls we are daily building higher and higher round us, we are in danger of feeling more and more like mice in some vast generating-station ; of forgetting that men remain more remarkable than anything men have made.

It has become as easy now for humanity to feel cowed and crushed before this roar of massed machines and machine-like masses, as for Pascal to shrink before ' the silence of the infinite spaces.' The individual needs new armour against the world ; new foundations for the Ivory Tower of his own thought, the one sure reality, among these vibrations of a million wheels. Yet that new armour can still be the old, re-forged. It is the dead that must help us to keep life living—the grace of Mozart and Ronsard, the smile of Horace and Montaigne, the courage of Homer and Hardy. Yet there are hours when the future can look so bleak, that the comfort even of these grows cold ; then is the moment to remember, as a last reserve, the spirit of the Sagas, with their sardonic fatalism that relied on, hoped for, trusted in nothing outside itself. There, like the Aurora of the Arctic winter against its darkened Heaven, neither bringing nor needing any promise of coming dawn, still burns the energy of Iceland—' the patience of the North.'

THE MIRACLE AT WINKLEBEACH.

BY G. R. MALLOCH.

Most of the miracles which are recorded in human annals seem to have had a definite object, such as the awakening of conscience to a sense of sin, the salvation of an imperilled soul, or some other divine purpose that could best be effected by presenting to human experience an event quite out of its range and impossible even to human imagination. The working of some change in those who witnessed it, seems to have been the invariable object of the miraculous event.

Perhaps the most peculiar thing about the miracle at Winklebeach-on-Sea lies in the fact that wonderful as it was, it achieved no purpose whatever and made not the slightest change in the lives of the two men who were privileged to witness it.

George Gunn was a jobbing gardener in a fairly good way of business. He contracted for the upkeep of gardens and employed a number of men to whom he farmed out the work at so much an hour. He was a big, quiet, hard-working fellow, much respected by his neighbours and employers: he was married to a nice woman and had a family of three. George and his wife were a moderately pious couple and attended morning service every Sunday, a habit which the Vicar and those of the local gentry who employed George noted with approval, as Mrs. Gunn intended they should.

I explain all this merely to show that Gunn was not a man ignorant of the Scriptures or unacquainted with the many miracles recorded in them: and as every Sunday since his boyhood he had sat in church looking directly at a stained-glass window decorated with the figures of many angels in robes of many hues and bright haloes, he cannot be said to have been unfamiliar with the traditional appearance of members of the angelic host: which makes his conduct when miraculously brought face to face with an angel seem all the more inexplicable.

Doctor Jackson had gone off for his annual vacation taking his wife and servants with him, and to George Gunn was entrusted the care of the Doctor's garden during his absence. The house was shut up and it stood some distance apart from other houses

at the top of Vicarage Lane, so that on the two days a week that George devoted to the garden he was entirely alone in it, and for the most part quite out of sight of even any rare passenger in the lane. He worked there by himself because he respected the Doctor and was too conscientious to allow any of his assistants to meddle with the Doctor's flowers and vegetables.

It was on Friday, the nineteenth of June, a hot, sunny morning, and George Gunn was pacing up and down the Doctor's lawn behind the lawn-mower, when he saw the angel coming down from the sky. He had paused for a moment to wipe the sweat from his face and neck and had turned his face slightly upwards to enable him to wipe his neck more effectually, when he saw a curious shimmer of silver against the burning blue of the sky. It made him feel slightly dizzy and naturally enough he put it down to the heat causing specks to float before his eyes.

He bent his head again and resumed his task. He had reached the far end of the lawn and was turning the machine under the shade of a cedar when a soft rushing sound caused him to look up again. And on the stones beside the fountain, a few yards from where he stood, George saw a thing happening that made his heart stand still for a moment.

Softly, lightly, with a flutter of folding silver wings, a figure of heavenly beauty sank through the air and came to rest on the stone pavement. It had the height of a man with the beauty and grace of a virginal girl and the poise and courageous expression of a boy. Its figure was draped in some sort of shimmering robe that did not obscure its grace: its noble features bore an expression of unsmirched and unsmirchable purity: round the dark locks that curled on its brow, a little circle of light seemed to float.

George Gunn stared at it in amazement, knowing it for certain to be an angel. It could be nothing else: it was like the most beautiful of the angels in the stained-glass window, only more beautiful. George's first impulse was to fall on his knees and worship it and stammer out a request to know the will of God in sending him such a visitor.

But just at that moment, the band which was performing on the front began its morning concert. Through the still air came quite clearly the opening phrases of the Pot-pourri of National Airs arranged by the bandmaster of the 53rd Buff Highlanders, with which that officer was so fond of opening, and worship in

George Gunn's mind was suddenly permeated by the familiar strains of *Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes*, and what we call common sense seemed to return to him at the sound. It said, or seemed to say, George Gunn, don't be a fool, that's the band down on the front playing *Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes*, a tune the missus was always fond of; this is Winklebeach-on-Sea, and you're cutting the grass in the Doctor's garden, and there aren't any angels about at all. Can't be—you must have caught the sun a bit—angels are only in the Bible and church windows and kiddies' books. Either that or you're going wrong in the head.

George bent over the lawn-mower and began to cut the grass again. He experienced a feeling of great relief at the thought that the Angel wasn't there at all and had never been there, and that he'd been seeing things because he'd caught the sun a bit. He remembered a fellow who went clean off his head after catching the sun in a harvest-field. When he reached the opposite end of the lawn, he went into the arbour where he kept his things and put a big sun-hat on his head that his wife had insisted on buying for him, though he always felt conspicuous wearing it. But she was right; that thinking he'd seen an angel just showed you she was right. Usually was, for all her talk.

With his head thus protected, George resumed his task. But he felt a curious reluctance to look in the direction of the fountain: he kept his head down over the machine, telling himself that he'd dazzled his eyes when he looked up towards the sun, that's what it was, and he'd better keep them down on the grass for a bit, till it passed off.

Nevertheless, at last he had to look, just to reassure himself that the angel wasn't there and never had been there. He stopped half-way up the lawn, but at first he couldn't quite overcome the strange kind of fear that made him reluctant to raise his eyes. Then, telling himself not to be a fool, he lifted his head, anticipating the sense of relief and escape he would enjoy in proving that the whole thing had been a delusion.

The angel was still there, a grave, lovely figure with folded wings, standing on the paved walk beside the fountain.

Something like a groan escaped from George Gunn's mouth. It wasn't there—it couldn't be there. If it was there, it might be the end of the world coming. Or it might just be one of those miracles that the Vicar preached about. But they didn't happen in these days. He bent his head again and began to push the

machine, stubbornly refusing to let his eyes wander towards the fountain again.

Who would believe a tale like that? Suppose he ran over to the Vicarage and told the Vicar an angel was standing in Doctor Jackson's garden, what would happen? Vicar would think he'd gone wrong in his head, send for Doctor Jones, likely, and they'd want to make him lay up and lose his work. Or maybe they'd say he was mad and have him put away. Maybe they'd be right, for spreading a tale like that. Of course there was no such thing there as an angel, stood to reason there couldn't. Who'd ever heard of such a thing happening? A delusion, they'd call it.

He glanced in the direction of the fountain again. The angel was still there, shimmering white and silver in the sunlight, the little circlet of light just above the curls on his head.

He swung the machine round savagely and began to cut the last row: it took him back towards the hedge that divided the garden from the lane. Nearer human company. Was he off his head? No, George Gunn knew inwardly that he wasn't off his head and that the angel was really there; and something in him cried out to be allowed to go and kneel before it. But fear held him, fear of the madhouse, fear for his wife and children, fear for his work, fear of public ridicule. Suppose he told them such a thing in the 'Fisherman's Rest'? He was glad he was walking away from the angel who might wreck his life, and yet he had a terrible fear that the angel might call him and he would have to obey it and go back.

And then, just as he was nearing the boundary hedge, he heard a voice, but to his intense relief it was a human voice and a familiar one to him. He brought the lawn-mower to rest at the verge of the lawn and looked up at the speaker.

It was Major Ross, for whom he worked regularly up at the Cottage. Mustn't let him see what delusions are in my head, thought George Gunn, as he mopped his brow with a coloured handkerchief, avoiding the Major's eye.

Only the Major's head and shoulders were visible over the hedge. He was a tall man with a fiery face and slightly watery eyes, wearing a suit of plus fours in rather loud tweed. Not a bad sort of gentleman, the Major, George Gunn thought, pleasant to speak to and easy to work for—nothing mean about him; even if he did take a drop too much sometimes, a retired gentleman

who'd been a soldier, well, it hurt nobody but himself, and no doubt time was heavy on his hands with nothing to do.

'Ah, Gunn!' the Major was saying, 'you're the very man I wanted to see. You know those dahlias you struck for me—well, I've not had time to put them out myself and it's getting a bit late for them now, isn't it? I'd like you to——'

Suddenly the Major broke off: his jaw fell and his face lost its red and became a sort of mottled blue. His eyes were staring—staring down the garden.

'Good God!' he said, in a strangled voice. George Gunn had noticed the direction of his look. Seen it himself, he thought, and waited.

But as suddenly, the Major's manner returned to normal; and though his face didn't quite resume its usual expression, his voice was quite calm and controlled.

'Excuse me, Gunn,' he said, with a faint smile, 'but I had quite a twinge of sciatica up my leg just now. Very painful thing—hope you've never had it.'

'No, sir, I haven't,' said Gunn, sorely disappointed at this explanation. So the Major had seen nothing and yet he had been looking straight at the fountain. Perhaps it had gone? Gunn stole a look at the fountain and turned away hastily. The angel was still there. Major hadn't seen. Was he going mad, himself, then?

But the Major had seen it, and now with his elbows resting on the flat top of the hedge, he was staring at it. What a marvellously lovely thing! Quite simply, he told himself that it was an angel. Of course it was, and far surpassing anything that Botticelli or any other painter had ever imagined. So it was true, then, all that stuff the parsons taught? An angel, and he, of all men, was there to see it. It looked as if it had just dropped out of the sky on some holy errand—and it had a halo, too, by Jove! A miracle—perhaps this was a warning to him! One hadn't led too good a life. A strange feeling of happiness and peace invaded the Major's heart as he looked at this visitant from above.

He had an impulse to go in through the gate and run to that shining figure and kneel before it. In his heart he knew that it had some sacred secret of life and eternity to reveal to him. He thought that it would have power to forgive his sins and wipe the slate clean. He would make a new start. He thought of his mother and his young sisters, and of the girl who had been his

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bride; and he longed to kneel and cry for forgiveness for many sins of commission and omission.

And again as he looked at the angel, there came into his mind how nobly the lads of his company had fought in France and how many of them had died; and how simple and good they had been, and how most of them had enlisted and stuck it out because they believed that it was the right thing for them to offer their lives for England. And he thought of other beautiful things and a strange feeling of peace and love for his fellow-men flooded his heart.

He looked down at Gunn, standing there waiting for him to speak—how strange that Gunn who was working in that garden hadn't seen the angel! Gunn wore a troubled look—perhaps he had seen it.

'You're not looking too bright yourself, Gunn—anything happened to upset you?'

'No, sir,' said Gunn, with a wooden look. He must be careful or he'd be blabbing out something about the angel and the Major would surely think he was off his head. Touch of the sun, that was it.

The Major tried again.

'Pretty effect the Doctor's got with his new fountain down there.' He pointed straight at the angel and Gunn had to look at it. But Gunn's face did not lose its wooden expression.

'Yes, sir,' he said, 'it's made a great improvement.' But the Major didn't see that Gunn had shut his eyes as he turned towards the fountain at first: when he opened them, he felt himself trembling because the angel that he could see and the Major couldn't was still standing there.

Suddenly the Major's feelings of peace and joy vanished and their place was taken by fear, fear cold as lead. Gunn couldn't see the angel; Gunn couldn't see the angel because it wasn't there!

It had come at last. The Doctor's friendly warning that he had laughed at—the Doctor had been right after all. How many drinks had he had that morning? The Major began to count them up—that early morning nip he'd found so bracing lately—one after breakfast—and how many at the golf club? He couldn't remember. But here he was, seeing things. Next time it might be something too horrible to bear. D.T.s! My God, what an end to come to! He'd swear off it altogether. Never had anything like this before, so perhaps it wasn't too late.

Mustn't allow Gunn to have a suspicion of what was troubling him. What would Gunn think if he knew that Major Ross was seeing an angel beside the fountain down there? All over the village in a couple of hours!

So controlling himself with a mighty effort, the Major continued his instructions about planting out the dahlias in a matter-of-fact voice, his eyes all the time fixed on the angel of terror.

And Gunn stood listening respectfully, every now and then glancing in the same direction at the same thing.

But at last the Major felt that he must make certain: the agony of doubt was working on him.

'You don't see anything unusual down at that end of the garden, do you, Gunn?' he asked suddenly, pointing again with one arm, as he spoke.

'No, sir!' said Gunn, almost violently. 'Do you, sir?'

'No, no, not at all!' replied the Major, his tragic fears confirmed. 'I—I just thought I saw some animal moving—must have been a shadow—or perhaps a stray cat!'

'The cats do get in, sir,' said Gunn. 'But I don't think there's anything there.'

'No—neither do I,' asserted the Major. And as they stood there uttering these denials of what they could plainly see, the angel raised its head and looked at them. For one moment they saw its face illuminated with a brightness too strong for human eyes to bear: and then its wings opened, all glittering silver; and with a majestic stroke of those shining plumes, it rose from the stone pavement, soared swiftly into the dazzling blue, and was gone.

They stared after it but dared not look at each other.

'Will that be all you want done, sir?' asked Gunn, when the silence became unbearable to him.

'Oh—yes, thank you, Gunn. Good morning!'

The Major detached himself from the hedge and strode away. George Gunn gathered his tools together and went home to his dinner.

As the days passed, more and more preposterous did the idea that he had seen an angel become to George Gunn. Looked at from any point of view, the thing was absurd. And the bearing of other people made it more so. A tentative attempt to engage his wife, whose common sense Gunn respected, in conversation on the subject of angels only led to disappointment.

'Dear me, George,' said Mrs. Gunn, 'whatever's put ideas

about angels into your head at your time of life? I don't know nothing about it, I'm sure, but if there's anythink you really want to know, why not ask the Vicar.'

'Oh, I was just wondering whether folk still believed on 'em,' said George, munching his bacon.

'The ideas you men get in your heads!' exclaimed his wife. 'I wonder what this new picture at the Hippodrome this week is like. "A Bad Girl From Broadway," it's called. We might go Satdy, George.'

'Oh, all right!' said George; he was only too glad to go anywhere or do anything that would silence his insistent doubt that he really did see the angel. He had thought once of broaching the subject to the Major when he went to plant out the dahlias: but fear overcame his courage at the last moment, the Major seemed so entirely oblivious to such things and intent only on the planting.

Luckily he hadn't any need to go back to Doctor Jackson's garden before the Doctor returned from his holidays on the following Monday. He would have been frightened to go there alone. The angel might have appeared again and the guilt of his denial of its existence lay heavily upon George Gunn, although his reason told him that it was impossible that he could have seen an angel, and that the whole thing must have been a delusion brought on by exposing his head to the sun. He went to the pictures with his wife and managed to forget all about the angel in the presence of the 'Bad Girl From Broadway.' But on Sunday morning in church he found himself facing the angels in the stained-glass window and that made him feel worse than ever. He worried and worried—was he really going off his head, he kept wondering, and began to drink an extra pint or two every night at the 'Fisherman's Rest.' He was due to go to Doctor Jackson's garden on Friday again: but the Doctor and his wife and the maids would all be there and there didn't seem so much chance of his seeing things with so many folk about.

It was on the Thursday that some chance remark of his wife's recalled the fact that his great-aunt Matilda had gone wrong in her head and had been taken away to an asylum. Once he remembered that, the thought of it haunted him almost as persistently as the figure of the angel standing by the fountain. And so it came about that by Friday, George Gunn felt that at all costs he must tell Doctor Jackson everything and learn from him whether

his mind was going or not. The Doctor would be able to tell him; the Doctor knew all about such things.

So on Friday morning before beginning his work in Doctor Jackson's garden, George Gunn went round to the surgery. The Doctor was surprised to see him there because Gunn was such a fine specimen of healthy manhood and very seldom troubled him except on account of his wife or children. But one look, as he said good morning, showed him that the man had something on his mind. He told him to sit down and asked what was the matter.

'I hardly like to tell you, Doctor,' said Gunn uneasily. 'I'm not ill, as you would call it, sir.'

'I see,' said the Doctor. 'Something on your mind, then? Is that it?'

'That's it, sir,' said Gunn, 'but I scarce like to tell you what it is, it sounds so queer like.'

'Never mind how queer it sounds,' said the Doctor, getting interested. 'You tell me all about it, and I'll be able to put your mind at rest again.'

Stammering and blushing, Gunn at last managed to unfold his story. The Doctor listened in silence. He was a little puzzled because Gunn's family record was free from any taint, and the case of his great-aunt had been one of sexual hysteria, and there could be no connection between that case and Gunn's fears for his own sanity. Questioning elicited a number of things: that Gunn sat opposite the stained-glass window in church every week and might be expected to have the figure of an angel stamped on his mind: that he had a pint or two every night at the 'Fisherman's Rest'; and that on the morning in question he had been working in the blazing sun without a hat. He didn't quite know what to make of it, but the safe thing seemed to be to dispel the man's alarm at once by putting the whole thing down to a slight sunstroke having caused a temporary mental disturbance leading to hallucination. And for all he knew, Gunn's account of his modest nightly potations might be misleading—perhaps he had been drinking to excess.

Anyhow, the man seemed to be quite sound mentally, and the Doctor explained to him that such a passing hallucination might arise from a number of causes and that there was nothing in it and that he must put it out of his mind altogether.

'One thing is perfectly certain, Gunn, and that is that you didn't see an angel in my garden. As you suggest yourself, prob-

ably it was all due to a touch of the sun. You say that the Major was looking straight at this angel and didn't see it. Well, that's quite enough to prove that it wasn't there. All you have to do now is to rest a bit and keep out of the sun. I want you to go right home, now, instead of doing your morning in the garden—it's blazing hot this morning and you'd better keep out of it for a day or two. I'll give you a bottle and you just take it easy for a day or two and you'll find you're all right.'

Gunn was only too willing to believe the Doctor, for whose learning he had an immense respect. He went home gratefully with his bottle, and such was the Doctor's influence with him that by the end of another week he was quite certain that the whole thing had been a delusion. The angel troubled him no more.

On the afternoon of the same day, Doctor Jackson interviewed Major Ross in the surgery. He was a little anxious about the case of Major Ross, who had come to him immediately on his return to announce that he had given up the use of alcohol altogether, and wanted some kind of tonic that would help him in the fight to abstain. Now, the Doctor knew perhaps better than anybody how heavily the Major was in the habit of drinking and what tortures he would have to endure in giving it up abruptly. He was giving him drugs to soothe his nerves and strengthen the resistance to alcoholic temptation, and keeping him under careful observation.

But to-day he was rather pleased with his patient: everything seemed to be going well and even the sceptical Doctor had some hopes of this old soldier's strength of will and heart.

'Well, Major, you're doing splendidly,' he said cheerfully, when he had completed his examination. 'Only stick it out like this a little longer, and you'll lose that craving and find yourself twice the man in everyday things; and on the golf course, too.'

'Thanks,' said the Major, as he rose to go. 'I'll do my best, Jackson, you can be sure.'

'That's all that's wanted! I can't say how much I admire your strength of mind in giving up a habit that was so strong just because reason told you that it was harmful. Many a man's frightened into abstaining, you know—but you're a volunteer, and that's always fine!' The Doctor was saying all this to hearten his patient, for he knew that the worst strain was yet to come.

'A volunteer!' laughed the Major. 'Haven't you wondered why I had this sudden attack of virtue, Jackson?'

'You had some special reason, then?'

'Yes—perhaps I should have told you before. To be perfectly honest with you, Jackson, I had begun to see things!'

'What sort of things?'

'Oh, not pink rats—it wasn't quite so bad as that—but I thought that would be the next thing if I didn't pull up. No—you'll laugh, perhaps—but what I saw was an angel.'

'An angel?' The Doctor looked at him, curiously. 'Where did you see this angel?'

'Of all places, in your garden, here. When you were away. Friday, the nineteenth, it was—I was talking to Gunn over the hedge. Gave me a shock, I can tell you. At first I almost thought it was real. But Gunn saw nothing. Standing by the fountain it was—I made him look there by a subterfuge, and he said he saw nothing—and there was I seeing it! Lovely thing, like one of those in the church window. I can tell you it was enough to make a man swear off drink!'

The Doctor was silent for a moment. He had dismissed Gunn's story as pure delusion—but here it was confirmed even to time and place by Major Ross. Extraordinary! And what an extraordinary scene it suggested: two men both seeing a vision and both fearing to let the other know that they were seeing it—one because he feared for his sanity, the other because he feared delirium tremens.

'Well, well, it was lucky it was only an angel you saw!' he said, with a laugh. 'Keep at that tonic and you'll see no more visions.'

He didn't want to say anything more about it to the Major; he wanted to think quietly about this strange thing that had happened to two men simultaneously. He got up and held out his hand.

'Good morning, then, Major!'

The Major shook hands and went out. Doctor Jackson sat down again in his armchair, staring out of the window with a frown.

The Doctor was a religiously inclined man. He had been a fervent believer in his youth and had at one time thought of going into the Church. But in obedience to his father's wishes, he had taken medicine instead, in order that he might continue the old man's practice and support his mother and sisters. All that was over now, and he was married and making a comfortable income. Yet not even the scientific training he had undergone had quite

sufficed to shake the inner conviction of supernatural truth that had remained with him. Outwardly, he was a religious man still, a regular communicant and zealous in Church work. But the burning faith of his adolescent days had long smouldered down and become a matter of outward observance and unthinking acquiescence.

Now he was telling himself that as a believer in the teachings of the Church, there could be nothing impossible to him in the appearance of an angel. The existence of angels was an accepted article of faith. They were God's ministers. Beyond feeble ridicule, science had no vestige of an argument against their possible existence. And faith told one that they did exist, and if God chose to will it, their existence might be visually revealed to men at any moment.

The Doctor became engrossed in such thoughts. Had a miracle actually happened in his garden on the previous Friday? If so, what could its significance have been? If one granted that such a divine manifestation had taken place! But apart from all the other arguments which suggested themselves as to its possibility, was he not confronted with the direct evidence of two independent witnesses, both of whom had come to him in consequence of what they had seen and whose chief desire had been to conceal from the other that they had seen it? Even legally speaking, that was enough to establish the fact. Curious, mused the Doctor; very, very curious!

On a sudden impulse, he rose, took a straw hat off its peg, and went out into the garden. By the fountain, they had both said! He went slowly across the lawn, trying to visualise the scene—the wonderful figure of the angel standing beside the fountain, the two astounded, frightened men by the hedge staring at it. If only he had been there, himself!

But in the open air, the Doctor felt more practical. Reason began to assert itself and explain the whole thing by hypnotism or telepathy. Major Ross was the dominant actor: he was an educated man of strong character, apart from his one failing; a man accustomed to command and influence other men. He had very probably seen this phantasm of his disordered brain just as he described it: the impression made on him was strong and terrifying, and beside him stood George Gunn, a less educated and more impressionable man, with his mind a blank, waiting to receive the Major's instructions. What had happened was obvious; it

was a case of thought transference, and Gunn as a witness of an angelic visitation must be dismissed. He had merely echoed mentally the impression made on the Major by a momentary hallucination. No angel had visited the Doctor's garden, the Doctor assured himself with a smile at his own folly, of which he now felt ashamed.

He had reached the fountain. It would have been a wonderful sight, he thought, an angel standing there with the water for a background. It was curious that the stories of the Major and Gunn agreed so closely as to the exact spot on which the angel had stood—but that, of course, followed from the rest of it. Must have been just here, where I laid that new bit of square paving myself, just before I went away on my holiday, thought the Doctor, and stepped over to the place.

And then he saw something that gave him a jolt. On the square paving-stone at his feet, sunk into the hard surface of the stone were two footprints.

The prints of naked feet, delicately moulded feet without blemish. The feet of a perfectly proportioned youth, the Doctor thought. He stood staring down at them.

Then he moved slowly over to the seat beside the pool and sank down on it. A thousand things raced through his mind: one, that his wife had been in bed since their return, with a cold; and Gunn hadn't been in the garden since that Friday; so probably no one had been near the fountain since then till he came himself, now. So nobody had seen this but himself.

And another thing that stood out in the confused race of his thoughts was that this bit of evidence which he alone possessed was conclusive of the fact that a miracle had occurred here. So that nobody knew that the miracle had been a real one but himself.

What was he to do? Tell the truth and be accounted mad? Proclaim the miracle and go forth preaching the truth of God's existence with the Major and George Gunn as disciples? Or take the whole matter to the Vicar?

The crude impossibility of any of these courses was stunningly obvious. He, the leading Doctor of Winklebeach-on-Sea, announcing that an angel had appeared in his garden! His practice would be gone in a week. Tony, his son, at his own old school, and the two girls at Roedean—they would have to come home because there would be no money to pay for them. No Oxford for Tony, either. Himself, a ruined, discredited man, regarded as

a mental case, his wife ruined and dragged down with him. All for what ?

Perhaps it was true, but it did not fit in with what seemed to be the truth of the Doctor's life. He got up and fetched a spade from the toolshed.

And with the spade he levered the stone up, turned it face downwards and replaced it.

So it was that the miracle at Winklebeach had no result visible to human observation. The Doctor's life went on unchanged, as he had planned it : George Gunn's life went on as a respectable, trustworthy jobbing gardener : and the Major very soon relapsed into his old habits and finally died of them. But if you knew which stone to turn up in the Doctor's garden, you would find on the underside the marvellously moulded impression of two feet that were not human.

IN THE FOREST.

(" In the forest are many voices and no man riding under the leaves hears the same voice as his companion. For they are diverse as the steep winding paths to Heaven-Town to which no man can come by any other way than that his own torch shows him . . ."—MARY WEBB.)

CAN the striving bough, or the solemn years
Of a stately bole, can the young leaf's laughter
Tell me the Word ?

In the utter stillness,
When the bare woods are a grey uprightness,
And a Winter whiteness, searching down
Softly as snow, feels the tall stems over
With a silver fingering to the quiet roots—
With this benediction ; and a little answering,
A little rustling, a little awryness
Among brown leaves, comes short, soft song,
Sudden, of the robin, as soon then ceasing.
This is my Word ; and I, the wood walking,
Stand like a stone at that Word's telling,
See the pale gold burst, and the white sky shining.

R. LOCKE.

THACKERAY AND THE MELANCHOLY HUMORIST:

THE GENTLE ART OF 'DE-BUNKING.'

BY COLONEL C. B. THACKERAY, D.S.O.

George Saintsbury's Three Rules: 'Never to like anything old merely because it is old, or anything new merely because it is new; never to judge anything in literature or politics except from the historical and comparative standpoint; and always to put the exposition of the subject before the display of personal cleverness.'

I. A WITTY CANON.

'It is a commonplace of present-day literary criticism,' says *The Times*, 'that the art of biography has changed its technique.' It is not only its technique, it is its whole code that is changed. Its motto (or slogan, save the mark!) is the second half of the apophthegm, 'To the living we owe consideration, to the dead—truth only.' Even this saying, at once contentious and sententious, hardly satisfies the more thorough-going of the New Style. 'Consideration and Truth,' they cry—'too petrified! Dry bones! They were buried with Queen Victoria. Give us something psycho-analytical with lurid sub-conscious complexes and repressions, which we will extract for you from the most unlikely subjects. Nothing so misleading as the Historical Fact, which is the origin of every erroneous idea of the past. You must drop all that, and start afresh. We'll give you a jolt. We'll make your flesh creep.' It is the staccato technique of the cinema—surprise—contrast—insidious allusion. Cinema-logical inexactitudes—to parody Mr. Churchill. And close-ups, complete from wrinkles or dimples to tear-drops. The process is known by that elegantly expressive, imported word, 'de-bunking.' At its best, it can be provocative, brilliant, entertaining, and even convincing. At lower levels, it becomes irritating, not to say nauseating. Unfortunately for biography, even the best of the New Stylists, even their distinguished founder, the late Mr. Lytton Strachey, are too apt to descend to the Lower strata.

Some such reflections arise when the New Biography asks us to believe that So-and-So, whom we had fondly imagined to bear

an irreproachable name, or to be a wit, or a *savant*, or what not, is in reality a sinister rogue, a bore, or an ignoramus. Or it may be a black-hearted villain who turns out a charming fellow; or some unknown, inoffensive gentleman is dragged into the glare of the spot-light. We are pained, puzzled or pleased, as the case may be, and ask ourselves: Is this *true*? proven? nothing hidden? The poor dead may deserve no consideration, but they are at least—even the most insignificant—entitled to the truth. One must look into this.

The particular instance which started this train of thought in the mind of the present writer will serve as a peg on which to hang the argument. A minor character only fills a few paragraphs or pages, and the technique of misrepresentation, whether subtle or blatant, is the more easily detected. The victim is Canon W. H. Brookfield (1809-74), Tennyson's 'man of humorous melancholy mark', and the book Mr. G. U. Ellis's monograph on Thackeray—(Duckworth's *Great Lives*). For here we have Mr. Ellis's word for it that the Canon, a much-liked and respected figure in Victorian society, was the 'original' of that egregious, slimy parson, Charles Honeyman of *The Newcomes*. A twenty-year-old friendship between Brookfield and Thackeray had just been severed, and Mr. Ellis takes it for granted that the author, knowing himself to be at fault, took his revenge by showing up his late friend in his *true* colours. Thackeray was not a cad, and the colours are demonstrably false. But a New Biography prefers a laugh, an innuendo or a sneer to mere evidence, however incontestable, when besmirching a man who died sixty years ago.

Brookfield left nothing behind him except a few letters; a book of Sermons (on which I am not competent to offer an opinion, even if I had read them), with a Memoir by his life-long friend, the genial though 'learned and pious peer,' Lord Lyttelton; a diary, in which he jotted down social engagements, dinners and diners (for he was a *bon-viveur*), with occasional incidents and anecdotes that tickled his fancy; and a bubble reputation as a Wit, which Mr. Ellis gleefully sets about pricking—even at the Canon's mouth. For this elusive bubble, having been blown by a social and literary set of so-styled Great Victorians, simply asks to be seized and punctured by the pin, or pen, of any self-respecting New Biographer—or De-bunker. If *they* united to call him a wit, he must perforce have been a buffoon—at any rate, his wit is suspect. For the rest, Mr. Brookfield combined the somewhat

incongruous duties of a hard-working Inspector of Schools with those of a popular Mayfair preacher, a Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen, and a Prebendary of St. Paul's, of which dignity he noted that, at any rate, 'it will put an end to the racking, sleepless nights of perplexity through which I have debated within myself whether a Royal Chaplain or a Canon goes into dinner first.' Humorous in a cultivated and scholarly way, he and his lovely and captivating wife were in the inner ring of a fastidious and talented circle. Yet in society he was, by all accounts, a formidable, not to say terrifying personality. The 'excessive gravity' which made him so alarmingly impressive added a special pungency to his peculiar vein of wit and mimicry; no one could be so riotously amusing—by the Victorian standards of Sir George Trevelyan's verses—

'When Brookfield has hit on his happiest vein,
And Harcourt is capping the jokes of Delane.'

In intellectual as in physical stature he was, in short, above the average. It seems a good enough record for a worthy and witty, if rather worldly canon, in less easy-going days than those of his more famous predecessors, Sydney Smith and Barham of Ingoldsby.

However, Mr. G. U. Ellis thinks quite otherwise. He prefers to conjure up for us, from what sources, other than the inner consciousness of the New Biographer, it is hard to conjecture, 'a good-natured, facetious little man . . . the communal Boswell to a circle of nineteenth-century Johnsons. . . . Brookfield himself (the Rev. Honeyman of *The Newcomes*),'—so says Mr. Ellis—'is an ambiguous figure,' who 'wrote innumerable letters to everyone.' His wife being the niece of Henry Hallam, the historian (father of Arthur Hallam of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*), Mr. Ellis guesses that it is from this 'fortuitous circumstance rather than from any great intellectual qualities . . . that she and her husband found their way into the society' in which they moved. Unfortunately for Mr. Ellis's guess, the Brookfields' circle of friends had its 'fortuitous' origin some years before William Brookfield met and married Jane Elton. It was at Cambridge, where he was President of the Union, that his friendship began with the Tennysons, Arthur Hallam, Monckton Milnes and other 'Apostles,' besides Kinglake, Thackeray, and what Mr. Ellis calls the 'right' people outside that set, of which Brookfield was 'a sort of honorary member.'

He described himself as 'an *acting* Apostle, though never rated as one on the ship's books.'

The New Style has the knack of compressing a maximum of inaccuracies, spiced with innuendo, into the smallest space. Brookfield was not a Boswell; he did not set up as a 'literary man'; he published nothing, and he did not write 'innumerable' letters to anyone except his wife. *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle* contains, outside their family, twelve of his racy letters to Lord Lyttelton, and *three* to 'everyone' else; a few appear in other memoirs. Unlike Mr. Ellis, but like Sam Weller, 'we wish there was more, and that's the great art o' letter writin'.'

Mr. Ellis judges Brookfield's wit by these letters, and finds it wanting. That is a matter of taste. But his reputation rested entirely upon social gifts; it was his talk and power of mimicry that the Victorians admired. The Georgian critic sweeps all this aside; the nineteenth century, says he, revelled in superlatives, and its humorists in red noses and gin. But every age has its own fashion in broad humour; sex and lavatories are now in vogue,—is this the true Attic ring? Brookfield's sturn of wit was exuberant but not broad. It was akin to that of De Quincey's *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (a title which, by the way, might well be applied to the *Newer Biography*). He knew his limitations and envied his wife's economy of words, which inspired him to a dissertation on that well-worn theme, the distinction between wit, humour and facetiousness. As a conversationalist, he had the art of combining shrewd critical sense with felicitous nonsense. It is a commonplace that the effect of good talk is incommunicable, and can no more be recaptured than summer lightning; its place is in the memory of the listener. One is content to leave it at that—with the opinion of Mr. Ellis on the one hand, and of those who were present on the other. This is what some of them thought about it.

When Canon Brookfield died, George Venables, polished journalist and Q.C., (who as a Charterhouse boy gave Thackeray his famous broken nose), described him in *The Times* as 'a master of humorous delineation' who 'never degenerated into a jester. . . . His conversation was richer in dramatic appreciation and reproduction of character than that of any humorist of his time,' though, like other humorists, 'his temperament was serious and almost sad.' Kinglake, a master of wit and style (the critics complained that *Eothen* was too flawless), spoke of his 'infinite humour,'

which was no 'mere shallow, mindless drollery . . . , his keenness of intellect and perfect command of apt words and apt tones.' Mr. Ellis knows better, and calls it facetiousness—a quality hardly likely to have appealed to the Carlyles, Edward FitzGerald, Greville or John Sterling.

The Master of Trinity, W. H. Thompson, described a whole party rolling on the floor with laughter, whilst Brookfield poured forth imaginary dialogues between real or fictitious characters. James Spedding, of Baconian fame,¹ solemnly analysed his humour, and found it 'a new and original form of human genius.' A 'more ordinary accomplishment' was his imitative talent. 'In his own person I never saw that he had any great gift of oratory. But if he had had a fancy to personate Lord Brougham in a character, he would have found himself gifted for the occasion with the power of rolling forth long periods of complicated structure and elaborate melody to clear and grammatical conclusions'; as Sir Robert Peel, 'he would have extemporised a very judicious Budget'; or, 'as one of the Wise Men of Greece . . . have improvised a sentence as wise as any of the Seven.' He turned his dramatic powers to more serious account in the readings from Shakespeare and Sterne that delighted his audiences at Holland House or at Lady Ashburton's parties. In his recent book, *For My Grandson*, Sir Frederick Pollock recalls Brookfield's inimitable rendering of Malvolio. 'Nature had given him an excellent and rather ironical wit. . . . The fates made him a quite competent country parson and an accomplished pulpit orator. . . . But nature intended him to be a great actor.'

The religion of Mr. Ellis's Brookfield was 'distinguished by a simple, unaffected insincerity . . . and in his pulpit he exhibited the pliancy without the adroitness of a Pepys. Yet,' he grudgingly admits, 'he was warmly liked by such different characters as Tennyson, Carlyle and Kinglake, which seems to show that out of his pulpit he had qualities which unsuited him to enter it.' So, in Mr. Ellis's estimation, the friendship of poets and philosophers unfits a man to enter the Church—a novel disqualification. Kinglake, indeed, when offering Mr.—and not less Mrs.—Brook-

¹ Spedding was a very lovable character, 'so long as you do not touch his Bacon,' said Brookfield. His serene and towering brow was a perpetual joke to his friends. 'Thackeray and I occasionally amuse ourselves with the idea of Spedding's forehead,' wrote Edward FitzGerald. 'We find it somehow or other in all things, just peering out of all things: you see it in a milestone, Thackeray says. He also draws the forehead rising with a sober light over Mont Blanc and reflected in the lake of Geneva.'

field a Somerset living in his gift, used the ironic touch to which he treated his friend's calling: 'I had a pleasant vision of my old friend (in his usual quaint, clerical disguise), and of a Madonna and Child in the long, low-roofed library. If this could have been brought to pass, it would have been soon remarked that Mr. Kinglake had begun to show a deep "attachment to his native county."' 'Yet,' repeats Mr. Ellis, 'his friends called him a scholar and a wit;—(but why these 'yets'? Could they not judge for themselves, and like him for himself?)—' And Kinglake could say: "Men may rail against the Church, but dear Brookfield, at all events—ever generous, indulgent, large-minded—was never in the least demoralized by taking holy orders."'¹ 'The effect upon holy orders,' sneers the biographer, 'is not stated.' It is not far to seek. If the performance of his duties in a quiet way without much reward, and a reputation among cultivated people as a broad-minded and eloquent preacher, rather in advance of his time, together with the affection of all and the enmity of none—if these things were evil effects, then certainly holy orders suffered.

If Brookfield missed his vocation, it was not a crime but a misfortune. His gifts might possibly have found more scope at the Bar or on the stage than in parochial duties; he had hoped for a naval chaplaincy, which 'would shew me the world with tolerably good pay.'² But his friends knew that his frank flippancy was only superficial. Spirituality is rare, even among priests, and to say that he was insincere, pliant, without principle, is not only ungenerous but untrue. He had other qualities. His quiet 'Gentlemen, I believe in God' silenced the scoffers when a discussion arose on free-thought. Though too unconventional for high ecclesiastical office, he won the respect of all with whom he worked for his devotion to not always congenial tasks, in spite of constant ill-health. He was the kindly Frank Whitestock of Thackeray's two papers, *The Curate's Walk* through the slums of a Soho parish . . . 'never getting any mud on his boots, somehow, and his white stock making a wonderful shine in those dark places.' Brookfield said the story was 'too literal to be very amusing.' When he was under the Board of Education, the humorous common sense of

¹ Kinglake, 'a consistent Nothingarian,' used to say that 'Important if True' should be carved over every church portal.

² I am reminded of a story told me by an old professor, my host at a dinner at All Souls. A young man had been his guest before embarking to take up an Indian chaplaincy. 'I hope you will find it a promising field,' said his host kindly. 'Promising field!' cried the enthusiastic shepherd of souls. 'I should just think so. Why you start on five hundred rupees a month!'

his reports, sometimes too outspoken for official approval, induced Lord Salisbury, then Lord Robert Cecil and editing *Bentley's Review*, to invite him to contribute his views to that journal.

This graceless scamp, we are told, 'clung assiduously to the "right" people from Cambridge down to the crypt of his church, where Thackeray shews him'—and surely Mr. Ellis must know—'living as the Rev. Honeyman and describes as "a fellow with a very smooth tongue and sleek, sanctified exterior."' Why not complete the picture? Thackeray also 'shews him'—Honeyman—as 'timid, vain and double-faced,' a habitual liar and a conscious humbug, until near the last chapter, when he gives him a touch of white-wash.

Now the above quoted sentence is typical of the New Biography—a farrago of inaccuracies and insinuations, pieced together from two separate works. *Lovel the Widower*, written six years after *The Newcomes*, contains some semi-autobiographical passages common in Thackeray's novels. It is in one of these that Honeyman makes the above brief reappearance as 'an old college acquaintance,' whose 'wheedling tongue' induced the writer to sink his patrimony in a worthless journalistic venture, in company with Mr. Sherrick, wine merchant, who, as we know from *The Newcomes*, rented Honeyman's crypt for his vaults. It is here—the oracle speaks—that 'Thackeray shews him [i.e. the Rev. Brookfield-Honeyman] living.' I may be at fault, but I have failed to run the Rev. Charles to earth in this wine-vault-crypt. Brookfield, indeed (for reasons of economy which do him credit, as Mr. Ellis omits to mention), once took up his abode in the subterranean dungeon below his church, *l'horrible bouge*, as Thackeray called it. To a man of his tastes it must have been extremely irksome, but he took his friends' raillery cheerfully. A letter to Lord Lyttelton, addressed as 'Unburied One,' elicited a rhyming reply—'. . . Perfidious Cavern-Dweller . . . cellar . . . dungeon . . . plunge on.' (At other times he is 'Loved Incumbent,' 'Pleasant Presbyter and Future Bishop,' 'Singular good Soul'.) Neither Charles Whibley nor Anthony Trollope, who knew W. M. T. well, connect Brookfield with the Sherrick transaction; they find the clergyman 'unreal' and 'overcharged to caricature.' If any allusion was intended, it was to some other 'college acquaintance,' for Thackeray frequently acknowledged Brookfield's 'generosity.' He had a rooted horror of debt, so Mr. Ellis marks him down as the snivelling cadger with 'a genius for running into' it, who was

rescued from a sponging-house by Colonel Newcome, and borrowed money from his pupils and servants.

As to 'clinging to the "right" people,' the clinging was mutual. Thackeray told his daughter that, like Pendennis, the Cambridge undergraduates were proud to be seen in 'Brookie's' company. Not the least distinguished of them described him at that time as 'a very handsome youth with a singularly attractive countenance and manner.' Another said, 'he never lost a friend'—which was true, for the one whom he dismissed, Thackeray himself, remained after all a friend to him. Though no prizes came his way, there was no tinge of jealousy in his delight at the dazzling successes of his friends. To them it seemed a lovable trait, but in Mr. Ellis's jaundiced vision it is only 'clinging to the right people.'

Worldly, perhaps, though not self-seeking, cringing nor sanctimonious, he loved a London life, where there was more scope for his talents. Perhaps he took too frank an interest in the size and character of his congregations, which seems to have elicited a mild snub from Charles Kingsley. His first curacy had been depressing—'nothing changeth in this most lithic spot . . . my hair and nails grow not . . . the birds hop not . . . the fishes flop not, the kine crop not. . . .' After excursions into Bohemia he settled down to Belgravia, declining a colonial bishopric and country livings; but, to the amused surprise of his friends, he migrated towards the end of his life to a rural parish (a resident curate enabling him to dilute its rusticity with a town house). Lord Houghton (Monckton Milnes) concluded an invitation with, 'I direct this to Babylon, not knowing your address among the beasts of Lincolnshire'; and Barry Cornwall (B. W. Proctor) to Mrs. Brookfield: 'Are you very pastoral in Lincolnshire? Do you feed the lambs there? Have you a Good Shepherd? Innocent sheep?' He was a favourite at court, but incurred the disapproval of Lord Shaftesbury by a sermon which stripped the devil of hoofs, horns and physical properties. 'The man's a free-thinker,' pronounced his lordship, and bang went any chance of episcopal preferment. 'The cart for heretics shall meet you' at the station, wrote Lady Ashburton from The Grange.

To sum up the character of this mean and sycophantic parson, Mr.—afterwards Sir James—Stephen, the judge, and a robust critic, wrote of him in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as 'a conspicuous figure' in a notable circle of society, who deserved 'a more tangible success in life than fell to his share . . . a wit, a humorist and an incom-

parable actor . . . whose talents were enhanced by the contrast with his excessive gravity . . . a clergyman of strong, plain, manly understanding, great vivacity, and no talent for any sort of nonsense. No one who is worth anything can know such a man and not like and honour him heartily.' He died a disappointed man, one of those who never fulfil the intellectual promise of their youth, or the expectations of their friends. It may be he was spoilt by flattery and social success, and lacked the humdrum quality of application.

Enough has been said to show what manner of man—or clergyman—he was. Is this formidable parson 'a fellow with a very smooth tongue and sleek, sanctified exterior'? Or 'a good-natured, facetious little man'? If Frank Whitestock and Honeyman are both Brookfield, Thackeray forestalled Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. There is a passage in *The Newcomes* where the author sketches another pastor, in contrast to Honeyman—'bold, resolute . . . a scholar and no pedant . . . he speaks of life and death, of practice as well as faith; and crowds of the most polite and most intelligent, and best informed, and best dressed, and most selfish people in the world come and hear him. . . .' To a more charitable eye than Mr. Ellis's, this picture is as likely to be a portrait of Titmarsh's friend as Honeyman. Mr. Ellis's composite creation is a posthumous libel, without even the resemblance of a caricature. He not only fails to hit the bull's eye—he misses the target altogether. A writer who denies consideration to the not-long-since-dead should be the more careful of the truth out of consideration for the living, among them still the sons and daughters and friends of even early Victorians. At any rate, he should not rely for his portraiture upon conjecture.

For Mr. Ellis frankly rejects Victorian testimony. If his estimate of Honeyman-Brookfield were a just one, it would convict the inventor of Honeyman not only of gross bad taste, but of treachery to one of his two best friends, who, as he told his daughter long after the rift, were 'dear old Fitz [Edward FitzGerald] to be sure . . . and Brookfield.' There is, moreover, and above all, the fascinating Mrs. Brookfield to be considered.

II. TITMARSH IN TROUBLE.

The Brookfield-Thackeray question needs a careful examination, for it played an outstanding and often misrepresented part in the life of the great novelist. No complete Life of William Makepeace

Thackeray has yet been written, though there have been several shorter studies. Lady Ritchie's Introductions to the *Biographical Edition* do not fill the gap, though they provide a delicate if uncritical background for some future work. Two of the latest commentators, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Elwin, ascribe the deficiency to her pious interpretation of a casual remark of her father's, three years before he died, condemning a pompous filial panegyric of Tom Hood. (Perhaps he would have objected less to the new, or what one might call 'Valet and Hero' style in critical biography, for a biographer is the literary valet to his gentleman, and did not Titmarsh himself teach us that no one is a hero to his valet?) But we know from Lady Ritchie's Journal that a few months before his death he again said, 'there is to be no life written of me; mind this, and consider it as my last testament and desire.' It is, however, arguable that an injunction even of this kind does not bind posterity—the lives of great men belong to the world, and without access to private papers there is certain to be doubt, suspicion and detraction. Whatever their limitations, the later studies of Thackeray help to sift the material.

The friendship between W. M. T. and Brookfield, begun at Cambridge, went on uninterrupted for over twenty years. The Tennysons and Arthur Hallam were their mutual friends. Hallam was engaged to the poet's sister, and his cousin Jane Octavia, daughter of Sir Charles Elton, poet and squire of Clevedon, married Brookfield. The Laureate recalled their friendship with Hallam in his sonnet to 'Old Brooks'—'for they called you so that knew you best . . .

'How oft the Cantab supper, host and guest,
Would echo helpless laughter to your jest!
How oft with him we paced that walk of limes,
Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden times,
Who loved you well! Now both are gone to rest;
You man of humourous melancholy mark. . . .
Our trustier, kindlier Jacques. . . .'

Henry, Arthur's not less brilliant younger brother, who also died young, lived with the Brookfields, and for ten years 'Titmarsh,' alias 'Tackeridge,' alias 'Thack-wack,' was the *ami intime* of the household. A closer intimacy never existed,—

'A friend I had, and at his side—this story dates from seven long year—

One day I found a blushing bride, a tender lady kind and dear!

They took me in, they pitied me, they gave me kindly word and cheer,
A kindlier welcome who shall see than yours, O friend and lady dear ?'

A year or two later, on the day when their first child was born, Thackeray wrote to

'MY DEAR MISS BROOKFIELD. . . . Sometimes your Mama and Papa will talk to you, perhaps, about a gentleman who was a great friend of theirs. He was a writer of books which were popular in their day, but by the time you are able to read this they will be quite forgotten—therefore the author himself did not much care about them, and he does not in the least wish you to read them. But what he would like you to remember is that he was very fond of your dear mother, and that he and your Papa were very good friends to one another, helping each other as occasion served in life. . . .'

So Mrs. Brookfield took his two daughters under her benign wing. And the proud, and at heart lonely writer, forty and silver-haired, slowly forging his way from comparative obscurity to fame, with the tragic-pathetic shadow of his afflicted wife darkening his life, fell under the spell of his 'dear lady.' Her appealing beauty, her soft mellifluous voice calmed him. Everyone adored her, and poured out their confidences to her; it was in her nature to soothe and flatter and charm, with just a touch or two of art, a little harmless guile. They met daily. His letters to her are perfect in their kind¹—and in his, which is the highest praise,—now flashing, mordant and ironic, like diamonds and steel, now blazing with scorn; here an intimate and tender glow or a subtly humorous twinkle, there a warm flame of jollity and humanity. Behind it all the reserved and over-sensitive gentleman with the proud spirit and the observant spectacles. 'The door opened, and there stood Thackeray, grey, grand and gay,' as, I forget who, said of him. He was in love with Mrs. Brookfield. When young Henry Hallam called a halt, he laid bare his feeling for her in letters both to herself and her husband. It was an 'artistic delight' in her

¹ Thackeray's letters have never been collected, except some to his family and Mrs. Brookfield. They are to be found scattered among Lady Ritchie's *Introductions and Letters* (edited by her daughter, Mrs. Richard Fuller), in biographies and magazine articles, and are the best and most revealing source of information on his life and outlook. Excerpts from unpublished letters in catalogues of sales often throw a fitful light upon his character, and are well worth a study.

'innocence, looks, angelical sweetness and kindness'; was he not the 'closest and dearest' of their friends, like a brother, bound to 'Vieux' by 'repeated proofs of friendship,' to Jane by an affection which formed one of the 'purest pleasures of his life'? These rhapsodies were not new to Mr. Brookfield. It was not 'Thackwack' alone who thus unburdened himself; Stephen Spring-Rice expressed himself in similar strains,—('one of her lovers—but their name is legion,' wrote the husband, pleased and proud, to his mother). It did not disturb the intimacy *à trois* until a day in 1852, when Thackeray took upon himself the rôle of his 'dear lady's' champion, and roundly lectured her husband, who was ill and seemingly peevish about the dinner, on his unappreciative harshness towards the angel. The offending words were, 'I ought to have married a cook.' In this petty and unedifying squabble, W. M. T. admitted he used 'quite unjustifiable' words, and Brookfield behaved 'most generously.' Now there may have been some truth in the reproach. It peeps out here and there in Brookfield's letters to his wife—never in hers. His tastes were not domestic and his repressed and exacting nature was perhaps more suited to bachelordom than matrimony. It may be that the pent-up, secret springs of brooding jealousy, for years suppressed and hidden even from his thoughts, at last broke forth. However that may be, he would not brook this open interference, and with an imperative gesture brought their friendship and the *tête-à-tête* with his wife to an abrupt end. He never relented, though there was a patched-up reconciliation. For the last ten years of Thackeray's life the two men rarely met, and then at other people's houses. The W. M. T. letters, tepidly received by the lady, soon ceased, and the only link that remained unbroken was through his daughters.¹ In time Job (J. O. B.) resumed an affectionate sisterly relationship with W. M. T. in an aunt-like capacity. Her husband accepted with aloof detachment this renewed lease of her old friendship on these more prosaic terms.

Two sisters, Mrs. Elliot and Miss Kate Perry, already '*mes bonnes sœurs*,' took the place of his 'dear lady.' 'I can't live without the tenderness of some woman,' he told her in a final letter after the parting, 'God bless you and your children. Write

¹ A letter to Brookfield, with a box of cigars, says, 'When I was ill the other day, I made a sort of will in which I begged you and FitzGerald to act as a sort of guardian to the children, and that you'd have them to stay every year with you and your dear wife.' Dated (apparently) the year after the quarrel, it is not out of keeping with W. M. T.'s pathetic desire to renew the old relationship.

to me sometimes, and farewell.' He wrote frankly but wistfully to the sisters, also close friends of Mr. and Mrs. Brookfield, sometimes blaming one or the other, sometimes both, sometimes himself. At first, the mortified giant gives vent to epistolary roars and bellowings. But in the end it is a feeling of regard and pity for 'the Inspector' that prevails, 'poor Tomkin with his restless eye ever and again trying not to look at us'—and for her a half-humorous feeling of disillusionment, that she could steal men's hearts and so lightly say 'good-bye . . . to those who loved her as women are not loved every day.' 'The thought that I have been made a fool of is the bitterest of all, perhaps . . . '—a very Thackeraynian sentiment, which may have been at the root of his anger; as Mr. Ellis well puts it, she very circumspectly contrived to make him look rather foolish. He had been 'flung over at a beck from the lord and master,' and she refused to allow she was as unhappy as he thought she ought to have been. But he was unjust to her; she only wanted to be kind and sweet and sympathetic to everybody—and there were so many!—who confided in her, and most of all to her *dearest husband*, whom, she protested (notwithstanding some irritability when he was out of sorts and the dinner not to his liking), she 'reverenced, admired, loved, not only dutifully but genuinely.' W. M. T. reports it to the sisters and groans 'Amen' to this *crescendo*. It was at first a crushing blow to him, and he hurried off to America; but in two years' time he had recovered enough to tell his mother that the moral was, 'Thou shalt not pity thy neighbour's wife. Keep out of his harem, it is better for you and for him.' It is the crude confession of a mistaken, but not a morally guilty, man. He settled down to *The Newcomes*, with the Rev. Charles Honeyman as one of its minor characters. William and Jane became invariably 'the poor Brookfields.' A year or two later he wrote from Sheffield: 'Poor old Brookfield was born here, my ♡ feels very soft towards him.' For, what with ill-health, disappointment and lack of means, 'poor old B.' was not happy. Though his sense of the ludicrous did not diminish, nor his innate kindness, yet his outward grim austerity, towards both the world and his wife and family, increased.¹

¹ He would say to his son, 'Arthur, if there's anything in the world I'm more tired of than another it is paying your expenses'; but when, after a silent and gloomy farewell, the young man embarked with the 13th Hussars for India, he found a quite unexpected cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds in his cabin, to buy a charger, which his father 'understood' to be necessary for a cavalry officer.

Was Thackeray a man who, in Mr. Ellis's words, would, 'turn and rend his old friend,' his 'dear lady's' husband, in an ill-natured lampoon? 'A man utterly incapable of entertaining a moment's feeling towards any being on earth which should give pain,' was Brookfield's description in youth of the future satirist, who never ceased to keep a warm regard for 'Vieux,' and throughout admitted he owed much to his friend's 'many kindnesses,' 'most generous confidence,' and other 'benefits.' One obvious point of similarity between the real and the fictitious parson—both of them fashionable preachers—alone lends colour to this latter-day legend. In everything else—character, tastes, behaviour—they are poles apart, though Mr. Ellis scrapes together some unconvincing, superficial resemblances—a curl, a surplice, some indifferent verses—and the cryptical crypt. If one believes that Thackeray, smarting under the rebuff, could deliberately relieve his feelings thus, it would be not a portrait but a vindictive caricature, not at all to the credit of its author. There were no recriminations on either side, and Thackeray tried in vain to heal the breach. I know of only one or two letters, written at white heat soon after the scene, in which he makes a bitter and unbridled personal attack upon Brookfield. But Brookfield, emotionally inexpressive, seems to have put Titmarsh out of his life; the name barely appears in his journal until, at last—'Thackeray is dead.' No more. He stood beside Dickens at the funeral. If his attitude was hard and unforgiving, it was certainly not that of a Honeyman; Mr. Ellis cannot, at any rate, call it 'clinging.' On the other hand, it was a weakness of Thackeray's hyper-sensitive nature to resent and strike back at criticism or censure. It sometimes led him to say and write things he afterwards regretted, and we often find him making the *amende honorable*. If from the back of his mind, as his pen filled in Honeyman's pitiable outlines, there crept in in half-conscious pique some malicious touches, some half intention to wound, it was a lapse of which he would rightly have been ashamed. Mr. Ellis accepts it as perfectly natural. I am not aware that Brookfield was seriously taken to be the counterpart of Honeyman in his own lifetime. But Mr. Ellis, with other dogmatic modern scribes, prefers his own speculations to any contemporary opinion, serves them up as judgments, and tacks the Honeyman label on to Brookfield's coat-tails.

The fact is that Thackeray suffers more than most great writers from the prying scandal-mongers, who will not allow a man of genius to *create* a character—to be an artist and not merely a

photographer. Mr. Charles Whibley fell into this error in comparing the Steyne of *Vanity Fair* unfavourably with the Monmouth of *Coningsby*, as portraits of Lord Hertford. Disraeli's Monmouth might indeed be drawn from the life. Thackeray's Steyne, on the other hand, is a different person, with only extrinsic resemblances. W. M. T. often said he 'never consciously copied anybody,' though, like any observant writer, he made use of traits and mannerisms; perhaps he was less creative than Dickens. When his Amelia was coupled with Mrs. Brookfield, he explained: 'You know you are only a piece of Amelia, my mother is another half, my poor little wife *y'est pour beaucoup*'—three quite different and much loved women (among others) to make up the sweet but ineffectual little lady, of whom, as he told Mrs. Brookfield's husband, he was not very proud.¹ Or again, Sir Richmond Shakespear, who was the best 'piece of' Colonel Newcome, would have been justly annoyed if he thought his cousin meant to immortalise him as a chivalrous simpleton.

The search for an author's models is an intriguing pursuit, but it requires more discrimination than Mr. Ellis shows over Brookfield and Honeyman.² To him Brookfield's wit was mere facetiousness, his religion cant, his friendliness toadyism—for to the new stylists the esteem of Victorian men of taste and talent is nothing but nineteenth-century hyperbole. It was, they say, an age of mutual admiration societies—though these *cliques* are as rampant now as at any time, and with no more reason. To the 'de-bunker,' all Victorian giants had feet of clay; his opening gambit, in the hilarious game of toppling them over, is to discount whatever he may disagree with, good or bad. He must raise or lower everything to a dead level of flatness; there must be no peaks in his country. But to be irritated with the older generations is a familiar, and often justifiable symptom in human relations. The idols of the hero-worshipping Victorians were not always, as their admirers would have us think, doing overtime being grand and noble. It is for us to distinguish between the truth and the humbug. The cult of enthusiasm is bad form nowadays, and its complement, the art

¹ Mr. Ellis's gratuitous suggestion that Thackeray's love for his 'poor little wife' was hypocritical, and his feeling for her other than deeply affectionate and pitying, is too unfounded to deserve notice—in polite language. As Mr. Desmond MacCarthy has said, it would be too banal to expect a New Biographer to allow a husband to remain fond of his own wife.

² The question is very ably dealt with by Mr. S. Nowell Smith, *In Defence of Thackeray* (*The Nineteenth Century*, July, 1933).

of invective, has been lost ; for, as Thackeray said of himself, the Victorians could hit as hard as any. Something in the Hang, Draw and Quarterly style on the de-bunking of de-bunkers would not be amiss. Modern critics adopt the insidious methods of innuendo and insinuation ; they prefer a stiletto on a dark night to either the clean rapier or the clumsy bludgeon—rather let the victim suffer the death by a thousand cuts than give him a fair trial and execution ; or let him linger on, maimed and disfigured. The cult of literary murder as one of the Fine Arts has spread world-wide, since Mr. Lytton Strachey, brilliant and apart, was chief assassin ; the rank and file count their scalps with exultant whoops in many tongues.

The New Biography flatters itself that, like science, it brings into play new inventions for probing the dark secrets of men's minds and motives and actions. The biographical microscope and telescope, sociological test-tubes, psychic crystals and reflecting mirrors are its instruments, and from these it claims to fashion a living gallery of Real Men and Women—not the Madame Tussaud effigies that satisfied its predecessors. But to those who fail to recognise these strange presentments of old faces, the new biographical lenses are only distorting mirrors ; the images reflected—whether amusing, fantastic, comic or repulsive—are too often not in the least true to life.

But let us take heart of grace. There are signs that the New Style is no longer the latest mode ; it has been overdone. What was at first a new sensation, a pleasant intellectual titillation, is turning into an irritating mental itch. Is it too much to hope that 'de-bunking' as a pastime may yet revert to an un-English form of sport ?

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Most social and literary memoirs of the period contain references to the Brookfields. I have also made use of their sons' *Annals of a Chequered Life*, by Colonel Arthur Brookfield, and *Random Reminiscences*, by the late Charles Brookfield, wit, actor, and Censor of Plays ; *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle*, by Charles and Francis Brookfield ; *The Cambridge Apostles*, by Mrs. Charles Brookfield ; and Lord Lyttelton's prefatory Memoir to the *Sermons*.

My thanks are due to the literary executors and relatives of W. M. Thackeray for permission to print extracts from his letters.

THE UNRELENTING NORTH.

BY C. C. VYVYAN.

It may be there is, in every settled quarter of the globe, some occult union between human beings and the country. Now and then we recognise it clearly; the peasant has a retentive, rather grudging nature like the soil on which he works, the mountaineer is hardy and inured to change and tempest, the mariner is unrelenting and unfathomable like the sea, his bride.

But in this era of paved roads and artificial aids to life which already begin to hem wild nature out rather than to hedge her in, the province of wild nature dwindles. Indeed, one may live a lifetime now without awareness of that occult link between the face of the country and the character of its men and women.

Yet, if one travels about the face of the earth, every now and then some chance encounter will reinforce a theory with greater vividness than years of home-bred observation; indeed, they are among the greatest joys of travel, those lightning flashes of intuition or of knowledge wrested from the passing moment and stored in our mental heritage.

Among all those flash-light pictures, gathered from Honolulu to Amsterdam and round the world again from Garibaldi Park to the Barrier Reef and Orotava, one stands out with burning clearness; a silhouette of Captain Cameron in the unrelenting North, a man wind-bitten, close-lipped, self-reliant, betraying in his cold blue eye a haunting memory of the emptiness, the monotony and the utter solitude of the country which had claimed him.

We met in Latitude 68 north, after a three-weeks' journey down the great Mackenzie River, two thousand miles as mileage goes; but in the reckoning of the traveller distance was incalculable, for every moment of that journey had carried us deeper into the heart of the magic North. In those long-sought solitudes we had been aware of neither past nor present, we had drifted down and ever down the river, knowing nothing of desire or regret, or, if there were desire, it was a mere blind instinct responding to the magnet that draws men northward with mysterious power.

We, of course, were mere onlookers, idle travellers from the

outside, while Captain Cameron had been 'In' for forty years or more. We had begun to use those words quite naturally by this time, 'In' referring to the North whence comfort is for ever banished but a man is indeed a man, and 'Out' referring to the world we had left so very far behind us, a world over-full, so it seemed to us now, with unnecessary things.

Our friend the barrister nearly spoilt it all by his introduction. He was prosecutor in the Eskimo murder trial while Captain Cameron was the leader of six ruffians who formed the jury. Logically our friend's case was unassailable, for of course Ikagena *had* murdered Ulukshuk; all the evidence at that long trial in the dining-saloon of the steamer went to prove his guilt. But no local jury would bring in a verdict of 'Guilty' in the case of one Eskimo murdering another. A white man murdered would have been another question.

However, that is neither here nor there and we shall best remember the King's prosecutor as the first link, a rather hesitating and reluctant link, in our friendship with Captain Cameron. He said to us:

'If you really want to know those members of the jury I will introduce you to Captain Cameron before I go out. He and I forgathered a year or two ago on Herschel Island; he is a rough old sea-dog, but I have warned him that you are ladies and he must curb his tongue accordingly.'

'Ladies!' we echoed in tones of disgust. 'How could you have said that? It is certain you have cramped his style.'

'Oh, you can easily take the lid off that,' he retorted. 'Anyway, you will find him good company, I hope, while you are waiting here for your Indian guides.'

And then the S.S. *Distributor*, supply steamer to that lonely northern land, backed slowly out from the mud-bank of the Mackenzie River, taking south the prosecutor, the judge and our other friends, leaving us in that northern outpost with the queerest feeling of isolation. We were fairly marooned; no voice would come from the world outside until the next steamer arrived in six or seven weeks, and after that a covering of frost and snow would wrap the country in silence; while as for us, our faces were set towards an even lonelier land, towards Alaska and that mosquito-haunted route over the divide.

Meanwhile there was delay, and we had neither friends nor acquaintance beyond the Gray Nuns of the North with whom we were to lodge. For a day or two we settled down to look about

our new surroundings and pack our stores ; then we sought out Captain Cameron.

We found him on the shore, occupied with his new schooner ; she was beached and lying sideways while he was putting in an engine and outfitting her for the white whaling season, having piled up the *Bonny Belle* last season in an Arctic gale. We forbore to question him just then but, in the days that followed, we had many a yarn together while he took a spell from work and puffed at his old black pipe ; we three sitting there together on the mud-bank above the shore where the Eskimos were encamped in tents, and their huskie dogs were tied to posts implanted in the mud, and their little fleet of scows and schooners lay anchored in the river. Across the water were those stunted spruce trees, and beyond that dark green Arctic forest the Richardson range of mountains showed brilliant blue in clear-cut outline. And every day the sun would shine with summer brilliance while two feet underground the earth was frozen hard.

I can see the old man now ; in black shirt, guiltless of stud or necktie, knitted brown cap running up to a point, cold blue eyes and unshaven face, worn blue trousers and mukloks made of seal-skin reaching to his knees. We never really heard his history, only, like a series of sparks, one anecdote or another would light up bits of his past, or reflect some corner of his mind, his rugged independent mind that, in all the devious wanderings of the man, had kept a certain stiff-necked integrity.

'My dad,' he told us, 'thrashed me when I was a youngster for some sky-larking that I'd never done. I wasn't going to swallow that whole, so I went to him and I said : "I'm going over the sea, Dad, and I'll never come home till you ask my pardon." The old man said : "I'll never do that so long as I live, but I'll leave the string of the doorlatch outside for ye, Robbie, dinna forget."

'Well, I went, and that string was always outside, you may bet your bottom dollar on that, you may. It must have been a dozen years later that I picked up a paper and saw the Glasgow bank had failed. I knew the old folks' savings was all invested in it and I wrote home and sent a cheque, for I'd made a little money that winter, trapping on the Liard River. What d'you guess the old Dad did ? He didn't stop to write and return that cheque, he telegraphed refusal. He wasn't going to take no help from his runaway son not if he was down to bedrock. I can see now the Dad had the fine old Covenanting spirit, he wouldn't change

his ways nor thoughts for god or devil; he'd have been grand stuff for this country.

'I'd soon spent that money and 'twas the year of a big gold rush in Alaska. A bloke in Edmonton put up the grub stakes for me and three partners and we tried to get in from the Mackenzie side; there was the four of us with horses and grub for twelve weeks. Gosh! but I'll never forget the silence in that great basin of country; it was deep as hell and wide as the sea, but do you think we could get out of it? Not we. It was like some cruel trap we were in and every time we tried to break through the mountains we failed. I can tell you we pretty nigh lost our reason those two years, the very bigness of the country fair got on our nerves, it was like some unseen devil holding us in and mocking at us. When the grub was through we ate our horses, and then there was only the fish lines and our guns to help us. We stuck it, though. In the end some Indians led us over that blamed watershed and, when we got down into the Selkirk country, why that gold rush was old as Adam and Eve.'

On the two burning questions of the north—missionaries and the intermarriage of white men and squaws—Captain Cameron had a fund of story and reminiscence.

To our surprise this hardened old sinner, for such he undoubtedly was by reputation and by every outward token, held the most rigid notions about the impropriety of white men marrying Indians or Eskimos. 'Tis a degradation of manhood,' he asserted, 'and that's all there is to it.' He always drew a line across his tent or cabin; white visitors would feed with their host on one side of that line, coloured ones on the other. Often he had found himself obliged to say to a friend: 'You can eat here with me, but your wife doesn't come across that line for natives.'

'A man must draw the line somewhere,' he assured us with a grim smile, 'and mine was always plumb across the cabin.'

On the question of missionaries he had much to say and little that was good. The very word seemed to rouse him to scornful eloquence.

'One time I met Mr. Gunn up Point Barrow way and says to him in a friendly way: "Are you any relation to Mr. Gunn the trader at Herschel?" He says: "I am Mr. Gunn of Herschel, but I'm a missionary; there's no trader of that name." "Is that so?" says I. "I'm a trader myself, but I never gave a sack of flour to a Huskie and took two fox skins off him."

'I tell you that missionary-trader chap had a gawd-awmighty struggle with his lower or higher self not to murder me then and there. These missionaries what do they do but teach the Eskimos it isn't modest to strip to the waist, as they always do inside, and the women too. Well, for myself, I never was comfortable that way, I always like to keep a sweater on, but as for the women, well, if a lad's twenty-one and doesn't know the shape of a woman he's no more than half-educated. And as for the missionaries, they seem to have forgotten how the Boss o' that there tuning fork of the weather up aloft sent down word once about the outside of the cup and platter being of mighty little use.'

When we asked him about his whaling experiences, he made a gesture as if to brush the whole question aside, but we could see a reminiscent look in his blue eyes, and then out came another of those sparks or anecdotes, lighting up the darkness of half-forgotten days.

'Danger in whaling? No' (with a snort). 'Why, what chance has a man blind drunk with rage against a cool feller? That's what the whale is, blind drunk with rage. Oh, well, there was one little encounter I had. You see the wounded whale was like jammed into ice, just a nick in the ice and we thought there might be room to pass in the boat or might not. Well, just as we were passing, up come the flukes of the whale and lashed out sideways on me and the feller in the starboard bow. If you can imagine several ton of good beef and muscle hurtling through the air and slashing at you, you can guess what it was like. I took fourteen years flying through the air, I did, and saw all that I'd ever seen over again. Twenty feet I travelled before I reached the water. And I knew nothing till next day when I heard the fellers say: "There's nothing to be done for old Cam. Can only just make him comfortable."

'That was the first I knew and I said: "If you think old Cam's stove in, you're darned bigger fools than I took you for." Then they said: "How's your back?" And I said: "Well, I guess my back's kind o' queer." They hadn't got no doctor nor medicine, so they gave me the best physic in the world, a good tot of Jamaica rum, and then they built me up in pretty good mason's work and plastered me in till I got to San Francisco. The man in the bows? Why, he joined the silent majority within the week. I guess I was pretty near the boneyard that time.'

On the eve of our departure we discussed our journey across the divide with Captain Cameron. Was it true, as the old-timers

assured us, that only lunatics and fish travelled by the Rat River route in summer? Was it true that the mosquitoes there were as thick as spruce needles on a branch? He took out his pipe and spat on the mud-bank with a thoughtful air.

'Them old-timers,' he said, 'they like to paint the country black, gives them a kind of reflected glory for having stuck it so long. But I never was that way myself. The North country is tough and cruel, you can't deny it. 'Tis no bed-o-roses, balmy, cradle life up here, nine months frozen hard and three months persecuted by them darned flies; but here we are for better or for worse, and I believe if we stick by the country and keep our heads, why the country will stick by us. The Rat River ain't no asphalt pavement laid for patent leathers, but there it is, 'tis a trail same as any other, and you'll get over all right.'

There is no doubt that the old captain had spent a life of unceasing action with very little time for speech or thought, ever since the day when he had left the old folks and run away to sea. Fishing, hunting, whaling; suffering shipwreck; seeking for gold and spending in three days what he had gathered in a year; that was his life. Judging by our all-too-easy standards he had been 'up against it,' all the time and everywhere; from his sterner point of view he had got as good a fate as any other man.

Even in that brief Arctic summer when the sun shone all the night and all the day, when wild flowers, pink and white and yellow, starred the ground between the spruce trees, the distant range of hills was sprinkled with snow, and lumps of frozen soil would fall from the concave banks into the river. Even in his palmy days he had neither butter, eggs nor milk, for no man, rich or poor, would pay the freight on goods to feed a cow or hen in those far northern regions. The grandest home he had ever called his own was a cabin of rough logs, and the simplest one a sleeping-bag of fur in the snow.

Yes, indeed, he was a man of the North, tough and hardened by endurance. You felt in his every word and comment a keen edge, like the edge of the Arctic wind. No flotsam or jetsam of the North was our blue-eyed friend, but a man tempered by circumstance and climate to the finest quality.

And the strangest part of it was that, in the company of this man of action, we felt as if we had stumbled on a modern Bossuet or Demosthenes, and we waited on his language spell-bound. He must have found somewhere, somewhen, in his life of action, time

for thought and speech, for both were closely knit, with never a crevice or inconsistency or hesitation. He had an unusual utterance, rather slow but never slurred; often he would roll his tongue with zest round a chosen word or epithet, often you could see the deliberate movement, watch the light and pride of ownership in the cold blue eyes as he coined some telling phrase.

But there were never any adjectival, flowing periods, there was never a word repeated, never a word too much; his emphasis was gained by insight, never by labour, emotion or reiteration. His own hardness had shorn off flowery epithet, but his cuteness had unearthed words with a tang, words that bit into the subject and lingered in the memory. The result was *multum in parvo*, and if the orations of Demosthenes and Bossuet had half as much direct movement and echoing backwash, well, then those two were worthy of their reputations. It is doubtful if either the Frenchman or the Greek could have added point to his favourite story, the yarn of the corpse and the missionary.

'There was a corpse frozen into the snow once when I was living at Herschel Island, unburied it was and the foxes came sniffing around. Best fox bait in the world is a half-gone corpse, didn't you know that? Well, the missionary he set traps to protect the corpse till the thaw came. I soon had the yarn going that the sky pilot was making a good job of fox-trapping with corpse bait. That yarn travel? Like hell-fire. Silent and happy like a clam at low tide I was.'

Curiously enough the day before we set out for the Rat River we heard his one and only attempt to give utterance to a reasoned philosophy of life. He was talking of the North, like a freeholder showing off his little property with pride and backing it against all other lands that heart of man could desire.

'A man comes in from outside once in a while and goes around asking for employment. Employment!' He reiterated the word scornfully. 'Give away one man's work to another when everyone has his own job? There's none of that here. We put it square to him. "Now look here; if you've not a cent, pull out up the river, build yourself a cabin and set some traps." Well, he takes mebbe a dozen traps and sets some deadfalls too. Deadfalls? Why, they are just timber propped up over a run; they hit the animal right on the head; no expense; made right there in the country. Well, in a few days he gets four or five pelts, there's a hundred dollars straight away. Good pay for a man's work, and a man his own

master too. That's the North. If you go outside and meet a pal in the city you accost him : "Come and have a yarn." He pulls out his watch and begins to reckon ; he's got to catch a street car, or get to bed at a certain time so as to be at the office bright and early, or else he'll lose his job. Up here a man don't reckon nor hurry, he's got all the time there is ; time cuts no ice in the North. Then it may be a man feels off colour and wants to lie around for a day or two. Well, there's nothing against that, a man is liable to fluctuations same as a river falls and rises. But outside you've no chance to follow the laws of nature, 'tis breakfast seven o'clock sharp and off to work or another man will get your job. And then you'd have to move around quick and lively to catch another, bowing with your hat in your hand and your heels together : "Here's my papers, here's my credentials, please give me a job." Regular as clocks you must be outside, and dull as a time-piece too. There's nothing like your independence here in the North and no man can deprive you of that.'

We put the other side of the question to him, reminded him of some of the things we had left behind, but he did not change his tune.

'Oh yes, there's hard winters and long nights, and empty stomachs maybe, and two bad seasons to one good it may be, and an off-shore wind with a leaking schooner. But you may as well keep smiling here. It's not much sunshine you'll get when you're put under.'

And then, without a pause, the inevitable backwash.

'And put under we all must be, or at any rate if I'm not buried for love I guess I'll make a pretty fair plague spot for those around.'

FLOWER POT END.

BY R. H. MOTTRAM.

[Patsy Curell lives with her father, Fred, and her sister, Violet, in Flower Pot End, and works half-time for her aunt, Rose Abigail, housekeeper at the Rectory, St. Mary-le-Pleasant, to the Rev. Edmund Curtice : years ago Rose loved his brother, Phil, who stole and ran away. Edmund inspects Flower Pot End, now scheduled as a 'slum clearance' area. Patsy's cousin, Walter, takes her to Holgate, where a stranger, half-tramp, half-gentleman, asks her if she is Rose, or Rose's daughter. This is Phil, shabby and impenitent : he revisits the Rectory, is welcomed by Rose and housed reluctantly by Edmund. Phil leaves, Edmund goes on holiday, Phil returns and is housed by Rose secretly in Flower Pot End, which is being cleared now of its inhabitants.]

CHAPTER IX

ROSE'S NIGHT OUT.

EVER since Phil had come stealing back to the Rectory, Rose had been obsessed by his presence. Even before he came, she had had a premonition ; ever since the Rector had shepherded him out, in the dusk of the evening, bathed and shaved and fed, and looking already more of his old self, she had been unable to rid herself of the idea that he would again return.

What a guard she had had to set upon her lips and eyes all that twenty-four hours that he had been under the Rectory roof ! How conceal from the Rector, less inquisitive, least observant of men of such matters as he seemed not his business, the joy, the sense of fulfilment she felt at guarding so carefully the secret the two of them shared. Every time she crossed the landing, her eyes sought involuntarily the guest-room door, so firmly closed on her beloved. She felt her lips part in a smile, resolutely closed them. Closed, they formed into the offer of a kiss, and she had to raise her hand to hide them. There was no one to see, but to her steadfast nature, a secret was a secret, and must not be shown, no matter if there were anyone looking or not.

She was able to see Phil four times that day, on the occasions when she took him food, by the Rector's orders. She gloried in the task, in the immediate improvement in his looks and mood, in the atrocious liberties he took with her. She forgave him every-

thing, the false position in which he had put her, the disgrace he had been, the years of neglect, his present misuse of her. When he dragged her head down to him, she only whispered, 'Is it nice?'

When he sent her downstairs again for more or different provisions from what she had brought, she smiled at him as she fled on his errands, and only murmured, 'Oh, yes, of course, I shan't be a minute!'

When he had eaten and drunk his appetite away, she begged of him with anxious solicitude, 'Are you feeling better now?'

That was all pure joy, and between her visits to his room, she moved about her duties humming a little tune to herself, never more alert in her life, and years younger than her age in looks, gait and expression. The tragedy came at length, when after his supper, the Rector was closeted with him for some few minutes. She knew by the disturbance on the desk in the study, beside which she had stood so many hundreds of times to receive a cheque for housekeeping, and the other expenses of their life, that money was in question.

Then they had come downstairs and the Rector with anguished precaution had motioned his brother out by the door, silently. And, standing at the top of the kitchen stairs, she had only been able to gasp out, 'Good-bye, Mr. Phil!'

He had not looked at her, or replied a word, and in a sense she was relieved rather than wounded. She did not know what she might have done if he had, and her sense of propriety would have been outraged had she allowed any hint of their real relationship to appear in front of the Rector. He had then gone back to his study, with a heavy step and downcast head.

She had gone back to her kitchen, and somehow, after that, the blow that should have fallen failed to fall. Or, if it fell, stunned her. But even more, the delight of having Phil, even to such a limited extent, and under such circumstances, softened her. For while she found her eyes swimming with moisture and had to dab them at the sink, and dry them on the towel on the roller, her lips were smiling, and she wasn't despondent. It was partly the renewal of joy within her, partly a queer intuition that, having once come back, Phil could never be so far away again. That had continued with her and she had almost fiercely attacked the preparations for the Rector's holiday, and the completion of the spring-cleaning. Then, oddly enough when she came in again on that night, little more than a week later, and found Phil with his arm round young

Patsy's waist, it had had the most contradictory effect on her. Rage at being supplanted by her niece was natural enough, but rage wasn't what she felt. She had, as it were, no time for animus against the girl who was embraced by the arm that belonged to her. It was more that, confronted with the very face and form that filled her thoughts, she found herself suddenly unequal to the task of giving him all he would demand, and which she would feel due to him.

'There!' had been her first thought, 'and the Rector away still!'

Amid all her bemusement and devotion there lurked oddly one practical consideration. Phil would want money, always had, always did, always would. She had only the few pounds the Rector had left her for immediate needs. Phil talked blarney to her. She knew it was blarney, and loved it. He could talk blarney to his heart's content, and she would listen. But she couldn't blarney herself. She had her own self-respect and knowledge of her duty, and she wasn't going to have him there with the Rector away, not knowing, and probably not approving, and told him so. He tried to persuade her, and it was monstrous to have to deny him anything, but she stuck to it. Then, of course, he began to talk in the way she couldn't bear.

'Very well!' she heard him say, 'then I must go!' As if she wanted him to go. As if the very thought of his going again didn't give her a pain on her left side vividly described in books and songs and on the stage as 'a broken heart.'

Her sobs shook her and she was angry with them, because she knew that that was no way with Phil. He had no pity. None. You must be your best, and give him all he wanted, or else he would sulk, and in the long run possibly even carry out his threat, and go away again, though she did not at the moment contemplate that she would ever have the fortitude to deny him to such a length what he asked. She stifled her weeping, and was rewarded by hearing him say:

'I didn't expect this from you. But it can't be helped. You're right, no doubt, to consider Edmund first!'

The wickedness of him! As if she were doing something wrong! Well, of course, she was, always had done wrong for his sake, and because of him. Had she ever considered the Rector as she ought to have done, where he, Phil, was concerned? No, of course she hadn't, she lied and acted deceitfully and must go on doing so to

the end of her life. And why? For the very reason that now and at this moment made her weak and tremulously joyful, in spite of her determination to do what was right, and her utter misery at the conflict between her duty and her love . . . his hands were upon her, that was the reason. It might sound silly, but it was a strong one, and one that had always prevailed with her, and she felt it overcoming her now and protested inarticulately.

'You won't see me again!' he was saying. He was torturing her on purpose, and she was in agony, and enjoying it, because it was an agony he caused. He could have thrust a knife into her breast, and twisted it round—in fact, he was doing something very like that—and she would not have flinched or withdrawn.

But he did worse. She felt his arm round her slacken, and the pressure of him lessen. That was really unbearable, and she cried out that it was and he calmly replied, 'You've nothing to bear! Do what you wish!'

What she wished? It was too much, as if she wished for anything but to be in his arms for ever. And he was withdrawing from her. Was that nothing to bear? And feeling her strength desert her, she called upon God.

It was no use, of course. God didn't come. You had to pass through these moments by yourself. And knowing she was beaten, she said what was in her heart, 'Phil, why do you always make me do things you know as well as I do are wrong?'

He didn't tell her. He just grumbled, of course, as he always had. He wanted a little help! She could have laughed. Was that all. She just argued weakly with him, postponing as long as she could the inevitable moment at which she must surrender, and deliberately waded deeper into the morass of deception into which love led.

He didn't argue. He just accepted her tantamount confession of helplessness.

'I thought you cared!' he said, and drew from her the eager protest that she did, and a last despairing cry of those who must drown for love, 'What shall I do?'

Then that young Patsy girl broke in with the bright suggestion that he might hide in Flower Pot End. She actually started at the sound of her niece's voice, so completely had she forgotten the girl's existence, not to mention her presence there. Well, that couldn't be helped, now. She had long lost any momentary resentment she might have felt at finding the girl with Phil's arm round

her. Who knew better than she that no woman could resist him? If he fancied young Patsy, who could stop him? Not she. But she did not see herself seriously supplanted, she was too engrossed in her own feelings and in him. He wasn't too gracious over the suggestion, but when had he been gracious? Young Patsy made a silly suggestion about offering him the attic over the shop. No, that she wouldn't have, Fred Curell was no worse than most brothers-in-law, better than many, but she wasn't going to entrust this precious secret to more people than was absolutely necessary. She disposed of that notion and sent the girl for the key of the new gate that had been put up in the passage.

Once the girl was gone, what delight to find him a more comfortable chair, to fetch him a drink, and make much of him! For he was going to be her good Phil, docile and tractable, and she wasn't going to have to be so ashamed for the things he made her do. He would stay in Flower Pot End, and no one would know, and on Saturday the Rector would be back, and if nothing had turned up in the meanwhile, she would tell him very gently, and beg him for Phil, beg that another chance should be given. After all, the Rector was a clergyman, and all those years since her first slip, the greatest consolation she had found in Religion was in the doctrine of Forgiveness. If she felt that, how much more must the Rector feel it!

When Patsy came back, she set to work with delight in the relief anything practical afforded. Together they gathered what might be necessary for him to spend a couple of days at least in the old workshop in Flower Pot End. Luckily, what with its substantial structure, the care of its late occupier, who had left it scrupulously tidy, it was in no bad state and a few strokes of the broom satisfied her notion of a place fit for Phil. Then she left him, and took her niece with her, and gave the girl instructions too explicit to be misunderstood. There must be no shadow of doubt as to the urgency of keeping this secret. She saw that the girl went home, and possessed herself of the key of the extemporised gate.

Then began for Rose an act of devotion that was almost sacramental in its solemnity. Had anyone catechised her about it, she would have been at a complete loss to justify or explain what she did. But within herself, unarraigned by criticism from without, it seemed a heaven-sent occasion in which fulfilment of duty coincided miraculously with her dearest wish. She had not made Phil free of the Rectory, in its master's absence. That would have been

a betrayal and very wrong. She had persuaded him from it. But the food and bedding she borrowed from the Rectory from him, that was all right. The Rector gave and lent all sorts of things of greater monetary value to persons far less deserving than his own long-lost brother. All sorts of dimly apprehended readings from Holy Writ, heard so often that they had sunk into her spirit far deeper than surface consciousness, came floating back, almost on her lips or sounding in her ears, or visible to her eyes, clothing themselves in the simple images, the warm colours, the splendid and appealing phrases of the Bible. As her deft fingers were urged by the warmth of her feelings, the atmosphere around her grew electric with emotion. All she had ever heard about prodigals and sinners, who returned and repented, women who were forgiven, love that was first and foremost and above everything else flooded her senses, without disturbing the shrewd practical efficiency with which she put together what she deemed needful, supplemented by anything she could conceive of as giving pleasure to the Beloved. It must be all right. That word, that very word was in the Bible, too. 'My Beloved is mine, and I am his!' she nearly chanted to herself, might actually have done so, had not her other passion, that for secrecy, forbidden. For she hadn't told anyone. She had sealed the lips and demanded the obedience of young Patsy, who had found out by accident. She could go to the Rector with the clearest conscience and no downcast eye, softening the shock she knew it would be to him, and pleading for Phil, all on the soundest of ground.

'Nobody knows, not a soul but young Patsy. And you may rely on her. I've spoken to her.' And then he could take one of his momentous, gentle, reasonable, and always too kind decisions as to what was to be done.

She made up the bundle, and with sheer pleasure in the precaution she had to take, let herself out of the Rectory, paused an instant, to glance up and down the deserted alley, slipped the key into the padlock, let herself through, and fastened it again behind her. How lucky, that, standing between the church and the Rectory, nothing overlooked Flower Pot End, and she was safe, so long as she kept out of the line of vision up the passage. She simply fled along to the farther archway by the old workshop, and pushed the door with her foot.

Phil had thrown away his cigarette stump, and was standing by the old-fashioned casement window, looking out at the desola-

tion of Orchard Court, that, in so few days, was beginning to have that indefinable air of neglect and decay that seems to grow, a species of spiritual fungus, on human habitations once they are deserted. Rose busied herself making small preparations, and did not by any means enter into his mood; all she said was 'You must be careful of cigarettes.' He didn't attend.

She did just notice that he was not quite sober, and sighed for the fraction of a second, having learned that this was the effect of a single drink on him now, and arguing, from her experience, no good for his general health. On the other hand, she was reassured by the sanity, the absence of 'awkward' mood when he spoke, 'What a damned shame! What clever noodle had this bright idea, I should like to know?'

'What is it, my dear?' She hardly paused in her task of setting out what she had brought, by the light of the flash lamp she had ventured to place in a corner. Phil was saying something clever about one of those abstract subjects gentry talked about. It didn't really concern her and was all to the good. It kept him occupied. He seemed quite taken up with it, though, and went on,

'Why, all this clearing out. There used to be some decent people living here. They were poor, but what's that? The chap who had this workshop—what's his name—and the man who kept a monkey. I remember how it stank. What was he called?'

'Oh, that's a long while ago. There was a man; I've forgotten what his name was. But they haven't been, lately, the characters they once were. Unemployment's been so bad, and some of them were Communists!'

Phil gave a sardonic chuckle.

'Don't. You'll make me laugh. That didn't please old Edmund, I bet!' He grew serious.

'What rot, though. They just wanted more money. Instead of which, someone buys the place up and they're turned out, into houses at some impossible rental, what mug did that?'

'Oh, I don't know, dear. It was something to do with the Council. The Rector was very concerned with it!'

'He would be, poor old horse!'

'Hush, hush! Now, do you think you could eat some of this?'

It took his attention. You could always win Phil over by food and drink. She liked him like that, it rendered him more accessible. He gave the little spread she had laid out for him one of his quick summary glances. It seemed to please him.

'Yes, by Jove, I can!' he replied.

'I'm so glad!' Her gratitude was heartfelt. She sat there and watched him feed. He became a shadow of his old superb luxurious self, made her drink out of his glass, took all those liberties that, from anyone else, she would have met with stern reprobation. But from Phil, no. He could do what he liked. She would say to him, gently, not meaning it,

'No, Phil, no!' It didn't make any difference. He went on just the same, and she had made the due protest, feeling in some obscure way that that absolved her.

At length, she repulsed him gently, rose with decision, and began putting things straight.

'No, lie down and try and get a good rest, there's a dear. I must go now. It's late. I ought really to have gone long ago. Supposing someone were to come to the Rectory!' She didn't suppose it very seriously, and he knew that, and laughed.

'Or the place caught fire, or something. I should be in a nice fix . . . Now be good. Lie down while I tuck you up. It's rather a make-shift, but it's the best I could do, and it will be better to explain to Him, when he comes home, than if you'd stayed in the house! Now, good night!'

Soft-footed and careful, she stole back. No, the Rectory was all right, when she let herself in. No one had been there, the place was untouched. Suddenly very tired, she put down the things she had brought in, and went to bed. Had anyone said,

'You abandoned woman, using your employer's goods to maintain a lover!' she would have answered, honestly enough,

'Oh, no. That's Phil—Mr. Phil. The Rector's brother. Of course, I do love him, and he is shocking in the ways he goes on. But that's all. It's all right!'

Yet the matter was on her mind, sleeping as much as waking, as a possibly restless child is present to its mother's consciousness, however deep her slumber. Once the sense of being in charge of Phil was so acute that she got up and went to the window and looked out. Her instinct was perfectly sound. Down below there a dark form moved noiselessly among the buildings. For a moment her heart stood still. Then it began beating no less suddenly. A policeman on his round! He stopped a moment before the gaping entry of the passage and switched on his electric bull's-eye. She stood transfixed at the window above him. Then he switched off, and passed on, out of her sight, on his soundless vigil. That was a

comfort. She didn't know, now that he had gone, if she were more alarmed or reassured. Of course, she supposed that if he had investigated closely enough there would be all sorts of troublesome explanations to make. But she got on well with the police, feeling them to be good fellows, with a very human side, and ranged, as after all, were she and the Rector, in the ranks of order and proper behaviour. She had so little grasp of the view the law might take of the presence of a stranger with no clear account to give of himself, in derelict buildings, that she felt that the police constable was helping to look after Phil. She went back to bed and slept.

She woke early, with a sure instinct of something to be done. Fred Curell would want to put away his shutters and perhaps make other use of the passage. She dressed and went across to the shop, and caught Patsy preparing her father's breakfast.

'Here's the key!'

Patsy grinned and reached for it, whispering, 'What about a cup of tea?'

'Yes, as soon as you've unlocked the gate.'

She ran back, put some food in a napkin, spied on Fred Curell, singing discordantly to himself as he came out, shirt-sleeved and spanned by his wide old belt, such as old soldiers wear, covered with the metal badges of various regiments. He took down his shutters and stacked them away, with good humour evidently increased by the forethought of his daughter in unlocking the gate for him.

Rose watched him go in to breakfast. An instant later Patsy appeared on the steps with a cup of tea in her hands. Rose slipped out, took it from her, and disappeared along the passage.

When she peered through the dusty window of the old workshop, she could see nothing, but on pressing the door open with her foot, saw Phil lying, half-awake, and thoroughly lazy, regarding her with half-closed eyes. She set down her burden, murmured a word of caution and endearment, and hurried back on her toes, hiding an instant in the passage and listening, then dodging quickly into the Rectory.

She repeated this manoeuvre successfully during the dinner hour, choosing the moment when traffic was at a low ebb in the Alley. At night, she had Patsy to finish the Rector's study, borrowed the key and went across to see Phil, with a light heart and considerably less precaution. She found him cross and irritable, and magnificently ungrateful.

'Come, I've brought you something nice!' she pleaded. But he didn't look at it, nor did he practise his arts upon her, readily as she would have submitted to any use of her that would have given him pleasure. Forlorn but faithful she made ready his supper, hoping patiently he would cease walking about and talking so loud. She paid little enough attention to his words at first.

'I've found out all about it!' he was declaiming, and though she would not irritate him by pointing out the precarious good luck they had enjoyed, she thought he might take a little more care. They had escaped detection, so far, but the danger wasn't over.

'The bumptious blighter! A chap of no sense or manners, and bound of course to interfere, thinks he can improve this old place by his precious development scheme, as I suppose he calls it!'

'Who is it you've found out? You haven't been doing anything risky, Phil?'

She didn't think he had, but you never knew.

'What do you expect me to do, shut up here like a dog with the mange?' he vociferated.

'Hush, dear, not so loud. It won't be long now; the Rector's home to-morrow, and he'll do what you want!'

'Not he! No drive, poor old Edmund. They'll have this place down and build up some horror, and ruin the look of the place!'

That seemed to her a dreadful exaggeration, but one natural in a person who had never realised what Flower Pot End had been. To him, of course, it was a picturesque old place full of quaint characters, whose people were polite because he was Gentry. He didn't know. She said gently,

'Oh, no, the Rector will see to that!'

'I tell you he can't!' he was shouting, and she wished he wouldn't. He was sober enough, she had good cause to know, but that made it all the worse. Better straightforward, comprehensible drink than this unreasonable excitement. Then she had to pay attention. What was he saying?

'I heard what that chap said. He came right up to the window, telling some builder person what to do!'

She stopped what she was doing, cold all over.

'Phil! He didn't see you?'

'By good luck, no! And he had the grace to say he wasn't starting this week. So I suppose I shall be let alone here!'

The blood flowed back into her fingers and feet. That was all right then. And it was only a matter of twenty-four hours now.

'Not that I care much, I nearly walked out of this hole to-day, and went to an hotel. Only I hadn't any money!'

'Oh, Phil, you mustn't think of it!'

'I can't think of it, without cash!'

'It isn't that, Phil. I've got some money, and I'd give it you, you know that. But the Rector said so particularly that you mustn't be seen out and about the place. He must have some good reason!'

'He has. There's some doubt as to what the people who don't like me might do, if I were recognised, but no doubt at all that it would be pretty nasty!'

She didn't answer. She didn't really think anyone special could be his enemy. How could they? But the Rector had said enough to impress her with her duty. So long as he would keep quiet just a little longer, that was all. But it was best perhaps not to tell him so. Rather try to get him to eat his supper.

She succeeded at last, but she could not get over the internal shiver, at the thought of these people, whoever they were, poking about the place apparently. Bobby, the builder, must have been one, who had walked all round Flower Pot End and not spotted Phil in his hiding-place. The effect on Phil had been to render him cross and awkward, and she left him, hopeful but anxious.

Another day dawned, and when she slipped over to see him, he seemed to have slept.

All went well until the time for the Rector's return. She had been across to see Phil, had made him as comfortable as she could and found him less cantankerous. But it didn't matter so much now; the time was short.

The train was late. Some minor accident had delayed the Rector's return, and when he did arrive tired and hungry, and a little depressed, she thought by the heat and closeness of Church Alley and its surroundings, after the beautiful places he had been to, she suddenly found it much harder than she had anticipated to tell him the secret surprise she had in store for him. He was so good, and patient, and tired, and Phil must be asleep at that late hour. He wanted to go to bed too. Finally she simply couldn't bring herself to do it. Let it wait until the morning.

She cleared away after he had finished and went to bed herself. There was still a light in the Curells', for that young Walter had

got leave and had come over to see Patsy. That was nice for them, though people did say cousins shouldn't marry. However, that was no business of hers. She'd missed marriage anyhow, and with all she had suffered wouldn't have it otherwise. Then sheer fatigue supervened, and she went to sleep.

She couldn't have said how long it was before she was awake again, fully awake, but in circumstances so queer that she couldn't believe her senses, and for several minutes, during which she could recognise the familiar objects in her room, was persuaded she must still be asleep and dreaming. That shouting, that running couldn't be right. The clock on her chest of drawers showed a quarter past three by the light of a summer dawn, but that must be wrong, for someone's kitchen chimney must be on fire, she could smell it. Then she made up her mind she was awake. It might have been the increased noise and stir outside, the recognisable tones of Fred Curell shouting something. She sat up, got out of bed, went to the window.

The whole of Church Alley was full of smoke and men running. There was something wrong, they were going up the passage into Flower Pot End. She was able to prevent herself from thinking what must be wrong, had the clearest conception that she must go and warn Phil, but most of all she must be properly dressed before she could go out among all those men. Hastily but thoroughly clad, shoes in hand so as not to disturb the Rector, she went down, undid the front door and let herself out.

(To be continued.)

PHILLIDA.

A STORY OF CAPE LIFE.

BY OLGA RACSTER.

PHILLIDA BONT was moving in. It was a great day for her; one she had long imagined. Her small black eyes, in her queer little face covered with tight yellow-brown skin, were peering out excitedly from under a large-brimmed black lace hat cocked to the left and fastened to her crinkly hair with several hat-pins.

'*Ach*, but this wind!' she muttered to herself, clasping the crown with her left hand and holding down her skirts with the right.

It was abominable! A Cape Town south-easter; a sweeping, gusty atrocity that filled the eyes with dust and blew people about in a state of maddening discomfort. It had hurled her into the tramcar, it had opposed her getting out. It had ruffled her, driven her, obstructed her, and now at the very door of her new home while her nephew was taking in her belongings from the fish-cart, it had, with redoubled energy, wrenched her hat off her head and sent it careering along the pavement.

'Tini!' she yelled to her nephew. 'Tini!'

But Tini was stacking up things in the back room.

'*Ach, toek! Allematig . . . !*'

She was a big woman; quick movement was difficult to her. Helplessly, her frizzy hair standing out round her head, her skirts ballooning upwards, she turned to pursue the hat. But it polka'd gaily down the street away from her.

At that moment Lucas Lee, coming from the station, felt a gentle flump in his chest, rather like a floundering bird. He clutched at the object, saw what it was, saw Phillida ambling towards him and understood. Lucas had grand manners; copied from the manager at the bank where he held the post of messenger. He straightened the wires of the brim, flicked off the dust, bowed politely, and speaking in Afrikaans said he did not think it was hurt.

Phillida looked up at him, wistfully, admiringly. Here was

a gentleman. *Ach!* what satisfaction it gave her to see he was not white. This man with his well-kept moustache sweeping over his mouth, his straight black hair, his upright figure was, like herself, coloured.

'Thank you,' she said with the ghost of a little curtsy.

He bowed again. 'So you speak the English?'

'*Ach*, English! Of course. It is the language.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' Lucas answered in the tone he had so often heard the bank manager use. His eyes roamed over the fish-cart standing at the door, at Tini stumbling out in his ill-fitting boots, at the odds and ends waiting to be carried in.

'You come to stay here?' he asked.

'*Ach, ja!*' Phillida answered, eagerly feeling she had roused the interest of this superior person.

He walked up the steps.

'You are Mrs. Bont?'

'*Miss Bont.*' She laughed. '*Ja!* Miss Bont. I go by the back room.'

'Oh!' murmured Lucas. 'I live with Mrs. Lee in the front room.'

'*Ach!*' Phillida gurgled with delight. She was going to be close to this distinguished man. 'You like Woodstock?'

'Rather!' Lucas replied with the drawl of a staff officer.

He waited for her to go in. She hesitated, staying for him. They went a few steps forward and a few steps back till Phillida took the lead. She passed through the door, her posterior swinging gently like the stern of a ship at sea. Lucas followed. With another bow he entered his room. Phillida pranced off farther along into hers.

What a day! What a marvellous day! Her hat had gathered some dirt, it was true, and Lucas in his desire to be affable had bent the wire all the wrong way. '*Ach!* but it didn't matter,' thought Phillida. A little wipe and shake, a little adjusting, and it was in order again. 'It was a won'erful hat!' She'd made it herself out of wire covered with a bit of large patterned black lace she'd picked up second-hand. Fortunately she had taken off the plume that day because of the wind. It should have sat in the coquettish bend which went downwards over the left eye.

That plume! Her mother had worn it with great *éclat* at her father's funeral; it had been lent to various members of the family for decent mourning, and now it had descended to Phillida,

who clung to it as a tree clings to its last leaves. She'd worn it a few weeks before when her uncle was buried. On that occasion it represented a lamentation tinged with gratefulness, for old Sam had left his niece £500, a sum which—with a little millinery—gave her a sense of relief from strain. It was a reward for the years she had stood in his fruit-shop in District Six, among decaying bananas, fly-blown hunks of dates, bruised apples and questionable vegetables.

From District Six she had now come to Woodstock near the edge of Table Bay. Not the best side. The down-at-heel portion but, nevertheless, part of that perfect curve from point to point. Coloured people lived respectable lives in Woodstock. After District Six it was like coming to live in peaceful open country from a jungle of wild beasts.

She sat watching Tini pile the paraffin-boxes one on the top of the other into a semblance of shelves. That was for her crockery. On the table at the side she would have her small oil-stove once used behind the shop but now to be looked at more than employed. It used to stink vilely in a smelly den. It had ceased to make an impression on her nose through custom. Now it was clean, and the sun was shining on it in pleased benediction. On the top of the pile she placed THE HAT in a cardboard box. It also contained THE FEATHER. As her most-treasured possessions they pinnaced to the height of the room. Her small iron bed went in the distant corner, farthest from the windows. She had always been accustomed to sleep with little air; had learned to dread it. She had no desire to try any experiments!

Tini pulled and fastened the bed-clamps together. The boy had a cold and snivelled as he bent over; sometimes stopped dead to wipe his nose unpleasantly on his sleeve. He brought in the tin wash-basin, the table on which the dates had stood outside the shop—how she'd scrubbed it!—the jug used for beer—her uncle drank a good deal—and the broken one used for milk, a little wall-mirror from which she had cleaned the fly-spots—it had been a wedding present to Sam's wife—a small larder made out of a soap-box and wire netting (much the worse for wear), a chair kept together by several sturdy nails, and a piece of worn linoleum from the back shop. They came in bit by bit.

When everything was there Phillida sat gazing first one side, then the other. 'It was won'erful!'

A train passed and caused the crockery to rattle. 'Ach!'

that was nice. It doubled her sense of respectability. A train which brought people from town proved the importance of the neighbourhood!

A cock was crowing at the back of the next-door house; a pig grunted; some children screamed at one another; a perky little terrier dog leapt about in the breeze barking loudly. The windows rattled, rattled, the door shook and kept bursting open. *Ach!* But it was peace all the same.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. By Saturday Phillida knew what the room next door was like. On Thursday morning she introduced herself to Mrs. Lee with a cup of coffee. The room was so crowded with furniture she threaded her way with difficulty to a chair. How strange it was, how marvellous to see two clocks on the mantelshelf, one that went and the other that did not, vases with blobs of Table Mount running round them in gaudy colours, numbers of little pictures on the walls interspersed with texts, 'LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.' 'A SOFT ANSWER TURNETH AWAY WRATH,' side by side with water nymphs playing in a green pool.

Phillida goggled with admiration.

'*Ach, ja!*' Mrs. Lee said carelessly, seeing the impression made on her visitor. 'It's comfor'able enough. Lucas painted the walls and got a new carpet las' month.'

She flicked away a fly crawling on the edge of her cup, then glanced over the small square of bright green carpet decorated with flamboyant wreaths of monster roses.

'He bought that at a sale, too.' She pointed at a large glazed bowl from which a posy of artificial paper roses stood up, flaming red, in stiff-necked discomfort. Phillida rose to admire. Close beside the bowl, on the same table, was a photograph of Lucas, in khaki, standing upright beside a field-gun. Photographic storm-clouds made a sensational background. Phillida stared at it, transfixed with admiration. Mrs. Lee watched her from her chair, sitting there in complete relaxation, as one unused to moving.

'My 'usban'. Taken in France. 'E fought somethin' won'erful. They gave 'im a medal.'

While Phillida imagined Lucas firing cannon-balls at the enemy—as a matter of fact he had looked after the mules—Mrs. Lee turned again to the room. She glanced round discontentedly.

'*Ach!* But ut's all more tr-rouble. Money don' bring health. Me with this chest and rheumatics! An' my 'usban' out all day.'

Commiseration of any kind had never been customary with Phillida, but it was borne in upon her that the moment had come when she must indulge in pity. She sympathised with Mrs. Lee, who brightened up wonderfully. From that moment when she discovered her neighbour's weakness Phillida saw a way of insinuating herself into the Lee *ménage*. Almost exultantly she offered to be of use to the poor invalid.

'I do, sometimes, for you,' she suggested to Matilda. 'No tr-rouble. Jus' come in and help.'

The other woman's mouth fell open at the thought of free assistance.

Said Phillida proudly: 'I do nothing now—jus' a little millinery, p'r'aps. I got my income' vested in the Building Society. Jus' do nothing much no more.'

They sat talking comfortably, till Phillida warmed to the point of divulging a secret.

'I want, so long, to go to communion.'

Matilda, deeply, morbidly religious, questioned: 'Why you not go? I'm sick, that's why I cannot.'

'I never got a dress what was right for it,' Phillida confessed.

'Ach, but a dress! The Lord, He do not look at the dress. He look inside at the beautiful, beautiful things he find there.'

'Ja, I know,' Phillida paused. 'It wasn't the dress that tr-roubled so much.'

'Not the dress?'

'No.'

Matilda waited to hear. Phillida remained uncomfortably silent. 'What then?'

Almost in a whisper Phillida answered: 'Corsets.'

'Ach, ja. You very fat.'

'I prayed. Ach, for so long I prayed.'

'An' the Lord was a friend by you?'

'Ja,' Phillida nodded. 'He was a friend by me. I got the corsets. To-morrow morning I go to communion.'

'The Lord give, and the Lord He take away,' Matilda commented sententiously.

Phillida became dumb at the thought. Her corsets! Taken away! Those corsets she'd bought second-hand from Mrs. Cohen! She hurried back to her room so as to prove to herself they were still wrapped in tissue-paper, lying in the cardboard box.

She tried them on that night before going to bed to see how

tight she could draw the belt—made for stout figures—without being too terribly oppressed. They were heavily boned, fastened down the front with spoon-bill busks as hard as iron, totally unyielding. She would be able to pull them tighter in the morning, she reasoned, when the stomach would be empty of food.

It was half-past seven next morning when she issued forth girt in body, elevated in mind, feeling that the Lord was indeed a 'friend by her.' She was going to thank him. Oh yes. She wouldn't forget that.

As she passed the Lees' door she stopped in astonishment. Coming out in a speckless dark-blue suit, a stiff white collar and neat bow tie, was Lucas.

'Good morning, Miss Bont,' said Lucas in his cool voice.

'Good morning, Mr. Lee.' She backed and filled at the door, uncertain about his going first. But Lucas knew manners. He'd watched officers in France, he'd kept his eye on the bank manager. He waited for her to pass, then put on his hat and swung round after her.

'Which way are you going?' he asked.

'To the Church of Saint Michael.' She wondered if he noted the improvement in her figure, hugging to herself the thought that she was near this beautiful man. What a gentleman! What a moustache!

'I go there too.'

Phillida's small brown eyes became tremendously excited. They were going together. *He* and *she* to communion. *Ach*, but the Lord was indeed a friend by her!

'You go to church often?' she asked.

Out came the fascinating, drawling: 'Rather!'

'I shall go often too, now. When I was a little girl I did go often, oh, so often. Our dear priest was so good by us. But he was a funny man, oh, I dunno, such a funny-looking man.' She giggled.

'Oh!' Lucas spoke gravely. 'Our chaplain in France was queer-looking. The officers used to call him "cherub," whatever that might be. What was the name of your priest?'

'Reverend Gordon. That was his name.'

'The Reverend Charles Carruthers Gordon,' said Lucas.

'You did know him?'

'Rather! He was the chaplain.'

'Oh,' said Phillida, falling into the ecstasy of memory. 'He

taught me the *chatechism*. *Ach!* He explained it somethin' won'erful. He tole me too about Jacob's dream. The angels on the ladder what took up messages and brought back the answers. Where is the dear priest now?'

'Passed over,' said Lucas. 'He went to the front trenches and was gassed. Well, his time had come. That's how it always is. When the time come, it come.'

They came back together, the tall coffee-coloured man and the small fat ambling young woman striving to keep pace with him as a terrier might strive to keep pace with a greyhound. There were a number of coloured people about; whole families of them. Many greeted Lucas with respect. Phillida noted this with pride.

Lucas was home on Sundays, so Phillida did not go to help Mrs. Lee as was her custom during the week. But gradually it became the custom for her to go into the room next door in the evenings. Often they sat outside on the little patch of dusty grass in front of the house, cooling in the moist air from the bay. She and Lucas helped Matilda to her chair, finding a good deal of trouble in transplanting her stiff limbs.

Lucas smoked his pipe and put an occasional 'Rather!' into the conversation. Matilda indulged in fits of religious talk, quoting the Bible in the manner of a prophetess.

One night after Lucas and Phillida had assisted her to bend her knees so as to sit down, she announced, after a pause for breath: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." That's a commandment every husband and wife must remember.'

Lucas said: 'Rather!'

"Thou shalt not covet the neighbour's wife, nor his ox, nor anything that is his."

Lucas tapped his pipe on his heel and shook out the ash. It was the close of Armistice Day. He'd gone out that morning with his service medal pinned to his coat looking very soldierly. Phillida had contrived to meet him as though by accident. She'd watched the ex-service men march by. After that she'd hurried home and was already helping Matilda before Lucas came back. She thought Matilda watched her more than usual. She sat in her wooden chair, speaking little, looking sometimes curiously, sometimes fixedly. She began to take exception to little things. The china must be put in a different place, the kettle wanted cleaning inside, the saucepan smelt of fish, she would have to get a girl. Obstacles, annoyances, unpleasant comments!

She looked at the clock. It was growing late. Lucas had not returned.

'An' where did you leave my 'usban'?' Matilda asked in a complaining voice.

Phillida had not said she'd seen him. At the point-blank question she was suddenly attacked by nerves. The feeling of tension in the room was growing every time she was there. It was scaring her. In a sheepish way she answered: 'He was down by the City Hall.'

'You went with him?'

'I jus' 'appened to meet 'im. I never seen before the Armistice procession. I jus' thought I'd like for once.'

Matilda stared into space; stared as though she beheld some unseen thing vanish; something of her own leaving her for ever.

"The light of the righteous rejoiceth," she quoted, "but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out."

She opened her Bible with a vicious movement of her hand, and became still.

When Lucas returned, Phillida was struggling with the ratchet of the lamp. The Lees had three lamps, but only one was in order. He greeted his wife, took off his coat, and immediately went to Phillida's aid.

Matilda, from her chair, sat motionless, watching.

'I don' min',' Phillida pleaded. 'You jus' leave me to get it right.'

'But, look here,' Lucas expostulated. 'You've got it put together upside down. I'll do it.'

Phillida stayed a moment by him, watching his thin quick fingers move. Though she did not look round she knew Matilda was staring at her. In a kind of panic Phillida exclaimed: 'If you'll excuse, I must go out to get something by the shop.'

Lucas opened the door for her. He was such a perfect gentleman! 'All right then. But you'll come in to-night, Miss Bont.'

It was later, when she'd gone to bed that Phillida awoke to hear Matilda's voice raised to a high pitch of anger. 'Sorry . . . My God! I should think you were sorry . . . me so ill . . . taking advantage . . . That's what it is . . . You're sorry . . .' The voice broke into a violent fit of coughing. Then she spoke again, and she seemed to be knocking about the room, stumbling over the furniture while Lucas was endeavouring to appease her.

Phillida drew the bedclothes over her head and sank deep

into the bed, though it was a terribly hot night. She lay, wide awake, a sense of misgiving stealing over her. Something was very wrong next door! She sighed . . . tried to think about life, her own life, with her limited powers of introspection. Was it hard for everybody? Was life intended to be given to other people? She'd cared for her Uncle Sam, suffered for his sake the vile smell of decaying vegetables, lived among low-class people—sacrificed herself when she might have been building up a nice little millinery business. And Lucas! A sudden vision of him in his dark-blue suit . . . he was sacrificed to an invalid wife. The voice of misgiving whispered in Phillida's ears. *Ach!* but it was difficult to live if one thought!

Towards the early hours of the morning when sleep was coming to her she was roused by knocks at her door.

'Miss Bont'—Lucas's voice.

Phillida wrapped her blanket round her, unlocked the door and put her head through the opening. She could just see him there, still in his blue suit. He looked spruce and cool as ever, but he spoke in a tremor of agitation.

'Could . . . could you come . . . help me . . . my wife?'

She did not wait to hear more. Dispensing with the corsets she threw off her nightgown, dragged on a chemise over her black shoulders, and pulled up a pair of knickers over her black legs, put on her outdoor coat over them, hurried, hurried.

Lucas went before her. Phillida was straining her ears for some sound. She expected to find Mrs. Lee groaning with pain, or calling out to Lucas. But there was a strange stillness.

The room was lit by a candle, it flickered in the darkness, casting a gaunt shadow of Matilda's chair on the wall. It looked empty; gruesomely empty. On the disordered bed Mrs. Lee was stretched, strangely quiet. Phillida advanced softly to greet her, but Lucas laid his hand on her arm.

'She was taken sick . . . very sick . . . last night . . . after you left.'

Lamely Phillida answered: '*Ach, ja!*'

'I did not know she was so sick . . . there was no time to fetch the doctor. She has passed over,' Lucas whispered.

An angry little gust of wind from the mountain slammed Phillida's door, left open. It veered to the front, cutting fiercely through the window of the Lees' room and blew out the candle.

Lucas sighed. He closed the window, searched for the matches,

and relit the candle. The lines of the empty chair were again clearly marked on the wall. It awed Phillida. It seemed to her as though the sick woman still sat there in spirit watching her. Gently, very gently, she went to the bed and pulled the blanket over the dead woman's face.

Lucas spent money on the funeral : a hearse with black horses, a mute, and following, a carriage driven by a smart Malay coachman. It was a little occasion for ostentation which no coloured person would miss. Following the hearse on foot were Phillida and Lucas, but only for a while. Presently they mounted into the carriage and drove to Maitland Cemetery. Phillida had on her lace hat, pulled well down over the left eye, the plume reposing in the bend, nodding gaily as she moved her head. Any emotion she felt was firmly held together by her stern corsets.

Several of Lucas's friends came to mourn at the grave, and the clergyman said the last words of comfort over poor Matilda's body. The Good Shepherd was waiting for her in her new and beautiful home, he told them. There was happiness and freedom from suffering for her now. He spoke about the comfort of duty and faith, the future with its promise and survival.

Then came the hymn. What hymn would they like to sing ?

Phillida turned to Lucas, Lucas looked at her.

'You choose,' he said in a low tone.

'*Ach*, but ? Shall I ?'

He nodded.

At first, diffident, she paused. The clergyman waited, the mourners wondered. With desperate courage she tried to think. It was many years since the Mission School and hymn-singing, and her church-going had been so fluctuating ! But she had not quite forgotten. Out of the mists of her youth, like the beating wings of hope, there soared, triumphant into her mind, the hymn, the one hymn nearest to her innermost thoughts at the moment.

Though still lingering in semi-uncertainty, the words came from her almost without her knowing :

'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'

'Right ?' she murmured a little exultantly, seeing Lucas's eyes on her.

Softly, very softly, so that only she could hear, he answered :
'Rather !'

AT LORD'S.

*(Dedicated, by friendly permission, to W. Findlay,
Secretary, Marylebone Cricket Club.)*

THERE is a field in England,
 A tended, velvet field,
 Where Life is like a sundial
 And thoughts old fragrance yield :
 Where sternly with Dominions
 A friendly war is waged,
 The crown of all the combats
 By English summer staged :
 Where men in serried silence
 Who once as boys were tense,
 Know, swept to joy or anguish,
 Sweet youth's recaptured sense ;
 They fight anew their battles,
 They hold again the catch,
 They see in fresh disaster
 The crisis of the match ;
 And memory warms to ripeness,
 A hundred glowing games,
 Watched from the high pavilion,
 Relive with storied names.
 Here all are ageless players
 And Time awhile stands still,
 His hand upon the wicket,
 And magic works its will ;
 Here fresh-blown Beauty musters ;
 Here clerks are freed from care—
 All on the willow's chances
 A simple greatness share.
 This is the heart of England,
 The valour, charm, and debt ;
 For here we must remember
 And here we may forget.

From snowfield and from jungle,
From forest and lagoon,
Men's thought goes winging, winging—
Beneath the turtle moon,
Across the heat of Asia,
On wild winds of Kashmir,
Through stinging, sand-filled tumult—
To turf so old and dear.
For fever-fighting soldier,
For settler lone and far,
For all the souls that wander
Where ends of Empire are,
For grilled civilian serving
A province wide as Spain,
Beyond all else of England
It stands for 'home again!'
Here many who have parted
Two score of years ago
For all Time's vengeful changes
Unchanged reunion know :
And many who were brothers,
Unseen, are sitting near ;
The music of their innings,
Like mist, surrounds us here.
Ah, hopes and flights long vanished,
Ambition's songs forgot,
Youth's splendour and its passing,
And all that we were not,
Life's ardour and achievements,
Death's sting and heart's rewards,
Our England and our manhood,
They live for us at Lord's !

GORELL.

THE SIX.

BY NUGENT BARKER.

'DRUNK again,' the landlord muttered, watching him rise and go. 'Eli, you're drunk!' They grinned and spat; the lamp shone on their faces.

The young man's shadow, cast by the light of the village inn, lay very faintly on the ground in front of him, for dusk was scarcely beginning to slip into the lane. Eli Lethbridge knew he was drunk. *They* knew he was drunk by the quiet and unperturbed manner in which he walked; whenever he stretched out an arm, exceedingly calmly and slowly, delicately shaping his fingers, it was always as though he had no need to steady himself, but to steady the thing that he touched. He walked to the farm that his father had left him, a lonely place, very seldom in the world's eye now, with fields running down to the tamarisk hedge by the sea. On his way there, he saw in the distance a party of nuns from a neighbouring town; their dark dresses, and white heads looking like the wings of birds added a feeling of destination to the landscape. He walked for half an hour in his neglected garden, staring at the broken fences, through which farm animals wandered to and fro; after that he went indoors and reached for his rifle and hitched it under his arm—the lightweight Winchester repeater, without which he was never completely happy—and after that he turned his back on the village. As he went, the clock began to strike in the church tower; when the last note was ended, everything sounded quieter than it had been before, and presently he heard nothing but the waves lapping far out on the sands.

The road that he was following led to a break in the tamarisk hedge; then it shelved between banks of seaweed, and merged into the shingle. The crunching of his boots on the stones was a sound that never failed to plunge him at once into a world of his own. From that moment, everything seemed full of purpose. 'Here we are!' he said: never 'Here I am!'—but he could not have told you why he spoke of himself in the plural whenever he was alone on the shore. It was neap-tide now. The thin line of surf, growing grey in the dusk, was interrupted here and there by drifts

of seaweed, or merely by the extreme lethargy of the waves. Eli Lethbridge stood suddenly still, and watched and heard the surf-line fritter away six times before his boots began to crunch again on the shingle.

When he was far out on the sands, midway between the shingle and the sea, he started to walk eastwards, and his shadow was now thrown darkly by the light in the west. Tamarisk bordered the coast. He could not remember the time when the smell and taste of tamarisk were unknown to him; but he did remember the day when he was basking on the sunny bank beneath the shrub, and a lizard had scuttled away by his feet, almost before he had seen it. The young man, walking to the east, ran his eye over the interminable length of hedge and the interminable margin of the sea, which were fading quickly into the dusk. Breakwaters ran down the shingle, and tapered far out on to the sands. Groyne after groyne: as far as his sight could reach, there were groynes, closing together with the distance, and he had seen them, clambered over them, stepped over them into white puddles, or skirted the ends of them, all the years of his life. Here and there, on some of the shorter and seaward posts of the groynes, a gull was perching. Hardly a season went by when the sand was not sprinkled with gulls, or the air pierced with their screams; but to-night, when only a listless breeze was stirring, very few could be seen or heard. He did not often shoot the gulls. He liked to see them rising and falling on long and passive wings above his head, or settling on the sands with their incomparable lightness and grace. Eli Lethbridge pressed his elbow into his side, and laughed. He knew no greater comfort than the feel of his rifle under his arm. The whole of his life had been spent in shooting—shooting at marks on the shore when the tide was out, shooting at lumps of white chalk on the posts of the breakwaters—until his eye had become as keen as a gull's. It was his hobby, and no one had ever been able to take it away from him. Even in his father's time a life of leisure had been granted to him, and he had spent it in shooting, in drinking, in walking alone along these sands of countless breakwaters, with his rifle hanging on his arm.

Of those numberless days, there was little to be remembered save here and there an exceptional shot, or an unwonted flight of sea-birds, or a week of storms, when sometimes a ship would be driven on to the coast; therefore such occurrences—he called them, to himself, 'adventures'—often came to his mind, and they came

there now. They, and the close evening, and the spirits that he had drunk, gathered to his head, while the young man continued to walk into the east, from which quarter the light was ebbing quickly and as quickly building up a curtain of crimson behind his back. After a while, the weight of the rifle began to turn him from thought to action, and several times he stopped and fired, and the distant mark was scattered in a spray of chalk, and the crack of the rifle was sucked away by the sands. Far to his left lay the feathery tamarisk, and the fringe of it was already ruffled into the grey-green of the sky; southward ran the sea, still ebbing, without a moon, and the sound of it was scarcely louder than the ebbing of the daylight. Though his mind was mellow, his eyes and ears were never at rest, but always searching, always ready to catch the ultimate sight and sound of the evening. And presently, in the distance ahead, he saw six gulls standing on six posts of a breakwater, motionless, as he had so frequently seen them before.

He did not often shoot the gulls. He felt that he had no wish, just now, to shoot six gulls. But they were many groynes away, glimmering, tremulous in the dusk that was almost darkness, and distance always cast a spell over him in the end. He dropped to his knee, and looked along the barrel at the beautiful, phosphorescent things, and fired, aiming low on account of the dusky light, passing quickly and evenly from one target to another, giving no thought to the wanton thing that he was doing, shooting because he must.

By this time, sombre clouds were blotting out the light in the west, and the young man's shadow seemed to fill up the whole of the sands. On his way to the distant breakwater, he paused, and stared over the sea. The eye of a light-ship, eleven miles out, sending no beam, and as clear as though it were a spark within a few feet of his face, burned suddenly on the rim of the horizon, remained for a period, and was gone. He had often watched this light in the evenings; and now, deliberately, cruelly, before continuing on his way, he watched it come and go six times, once for each of the gulls he had killed. . . .

Eli Lethbridge had never heard of Wordsworth's evening, 'quiet as a nun.' This, indeed, was as quiet as a nun, and it was quieter—it was as quiet as six nuns. They were sitting on the sands, with their hands in their laps, and their feet pointing to the east. Their heads, clothed in their lovely flying coifs, were still showing above the short posts of the breakwater. It was clear that they had been sleeping. The six were dead.

HAIR: A HARLEQUINADE.

BY C. E. LAWRENCE.

WHY hair, beyond all other physical attributes, should be the inevitable sport of humorists is a question possibly not worth enquiring into. The fact remains. A bald spot or any sort of whiskers, a 'toothbrush' or a 'walrus' moustache, a wig, 'mutton-chops,' the under-chin ruff of the elderly and evangelical agriculturist, the backward sweep of the recent gentleman called a nut, the ringlets of Judah, an imperial, such hirsute abundance as Count d'Orsay or Alfred de Musset or the younger and greater Dizzy rejoiced in; every one of those peculiar tendencies of hair, whether generous, parsimonious or artificial, is sure to win a snigger or guffaw from somebody, so long as the point of the joke is obvious. There was a melancholy humorist some years ago who made a 'special line' in this department of facetiousness. He grew into the habit of calling a moustache 'face-fungus'; and his end was too pathetic to dwell upon.

The truth remains that while the ears or even the nose, the mouth, the legs, the stature, the walk of a man, may only rarely be regarded as funny, the hair of his head, and especially the hair of his cheek, is looked upon as ordained for the amusement of the crowd. Even the monocle was only found mirthful when associated with whiskers. Normally it was generally regarded as mere evidence of mental inadequacy or a military mind; but accompanied by 'Dundrearies' it was discovered to be killing. Well, the humorist who is not quite humorous must have his humour. Hair is universal and nearly everywhere is obvious; hence the occasion and the impulse irresistible. It is one of the many things that must be put up with and cannot be helped.

Its importance began early in the history of mankind. The strength of Samson dwelt in his hair. It is of no use to ask how or why it did so. Delilah settled the question clearly, when with blandishments and shears she snipped her man, and, besides being a baggage or a patriot, was the first of the profession of lady barbers. It was a pity, as things turned out, that Absalom, also, had not his Delilah; for he seems to have been on the whole rather an

attractive young fellow, and certainly the Jews of all times could ill spare their really nice people. So that when, in hurrying through a wood his floating locks were caught in the branches and he was suspended, dangling between earth and heaven, there to be caught and killed, it proved a pity that his luxuriance had not been bobbed. Elisha, that unpleasant prophet, with his bald head was at the other extreme; and because the rude children said so aloud, and told him to 'go up,' a bear appeared out of the woods and killed the little fellows. Between Elisha and those children most moderns would probably be on the side of the children, for they were only following a natural impulse; but between Elisha, the children, and the bear, who is not for the bear?

Is there, or is there not, a connection between hair and the intellect? Socrates, we know, was bald; so were Shakespeare, Julius Cæsar, Voltaire, William Wordsworth, Herbert Spencer—all periods contribute examples; and, fortunately, the ladies can be excluded from this particular, as actually it is complimentary on this occasion to ignore them. With such witnesses as the foregoing great men at once occurring, it would be needless to continue the enquiry, if it were not obvious to the most casual citizen that the Intelligentsia, generally so self-styled, evidently do claim a close connection between brains and the capillaries.

The minor poets, the minor painters, the little people generally, who without quite being able to create cluster about the footstools of the Arts, often appear to cultivate an eccentricity of coiffure. Montmartre, the Latin Quarter, and Bedford Park have been so full of hairy intellectualists as sometimes to make them even bywords of fun, though frequently, through the impudence of incompetence proclaiming their bad to be good, they have been able to gull the careless into thinking that hair and inspiration somehow necessarily do go together.

Yet such use as that of the divine ordinance called hair, of course, is merely the accentuation of a pose. The really great have something better to think about than the nicety of a parting or a curl-cluster over the dexter eyebrow. Shelley or Keats, as far above those babblers as a star is removed from the common clay, was too busily singing his dreams to think of the slope of his forelock. So that without more ado we may take it that an excess or extravagant arrangement of hair does not necessarily predispose to brains, but is possibly a disadvantage through requiring thought about *that* instead of about what matters.

Unquestionably, the hair may lend dignity to a person. The glory of the woman, it is also, not infrequently, the making of the man. Recall Thackeray's drawing and description of Louis Quatorze with and without his perruquier's crown of curls. Wearing a full-bottomed wig he was *le grand Monarque*, a power before whose frowns or whims statesmen trembled; an authority who caused William the Third and the lofty Chatham to feel perturbed and anxious. But take away the wig, the robes, the high red heels of his shoes, and there was a mean little bald old man, not even a shadow of greatness; the puppet of his mistresses, the moral companion of a shady valet de chambre; in Falstaff's phrase, a 'forked radish.'

False hair has been an influence in civilisation almost from the first. In very early ages they wore wigs, as the British Museum bears witness; while the fuss made over his curls by the monarch of Assyria encourages a little arithmetic. Experts tell us there were two hundred and forty of those little curls on the lordly Assyrian's hair and beard, and that every curl took half a minute to make; therefore, two hours a day were required for that detail of toilette alone. As America says, Can you beat it?

The English Augustan age especially needed the fashion of its big wigs to bolster it up; for in spite of Addison, Goldsmith, Steele, Johnson and Newton, that was a mean period of scrambling, fussy and paltry men, careless about honour while infinitely concerned over honours, looking to a lord's patronage and the fluff and drivel of coffee-house gossip—with the wig, especially the full-bottomed wig—for their importance. At no time have ideals been fainter in this country than during the age of Beau Tibbs, Beau Nash, Beau Brummel and the coffee-house gossips. To snuff according to rule, to carry a cane nicely, to talk odds-bodikins, to be insolent and smart, to take offence whenever he knew that certainly he was the better-placed or the stronger, was the first province of the gentleman then—almost his whole duty of life—and this condition of moral cowardice had come about because the dignity of man in those artificial times rested in his apparel, his outward appearance, and not so much in himself.

Yet, so far as personal unimportance went, there was an almost more preposterous time even than that—the age of the fops which succeeded the era of the dandies; the period of pegtop trousers, flaming waistcoats, lavender gloves, floating innumerable watch-chains, and the whisksers that wept—with men sometimes wearing rings outside their gloves.

No wonder that during those young Victorian years—although, it is true, some great books happened to be written then—largeness of heart and the generous emotions almost went out. In music and the limned and plastic arts especially, inspiration was an emptiness, conventionality supreme. Those years prepared the way for the peering, pottering, pushful, too-personal photographer and the snip-paragraphist; while the taste of the milliner over architecture and many things else was supreme. Mr. Mantalini was very nearly the spirit of that age and life generally was insincerely, but not so untruthfully, accounted as ‘demd and howwid.’

How seriously the human puppy of the time took his whiskers is shown by John Leech. Every new bristle was an added hope, the glory of the mannikin was in the hair of his face; just as when Jos Sedley in the panic before Waterloo removed his bunched ferocities, and thereby proved not only the reality of the Napoleonic menace but also his own moral contemptibleness. There certainly is a sort of manhood which needs the disguise of hair for its assertion. How often has a brave beard covered an unassertive chin!

Our fathers, and their fathers before them, often allowed the hair of their faces to overwhelm and misuse them. To look through a photograph-album of the sixties and the seventies is to feel how grievously our ancestors of that generation were burdened. Old fellows as bearded as Moses stare wistfully from the niches of the mournful pages; and it comes as a shock to learn that when their daguerreotype or carte-de-visite was taken those patriarchs actually were only thirty or thirty-five years of age. What infinite joy for them must have been suppressed and destroyed through the inhibitions represented by their flowing hirsute circumstance! No wonder they lived at a time when all manner of parlour-quacks, with spelling-bees and table-turning, flourished! People were forced to be super-serious or super-silly under their tyrannous thatch! How could they feel light-hearted knowing themselves weightily geared with locks and whiskers, although their hearts must still have pulsed with the secret, blessed foolishness of youth.

The intolerable quantity of hair then deemed necessary or fashionable must have been the cause of the humbug of those days, which fastened as a blight on the young and made their smiles, when photographed, so studied, fixed, pathetic.

Hair was tyrannous then also in other ways. No young woman of the time could run with enjoyment; not because to do so was improper, though the older generations, misreading the truth as

always elder generations have done, called it so; but because any unusual exercise endangered the chignon, the water-fall, the pigtail, the front or bang or fringe, or the bun; and in the days of the swooning Amelias to find the hair coming down was to suffer a major catastrophe of feminine life. Possibly this explains the popularity of croquet then, for croquet could endanger nothing. That exercise, so gentle as almost to be standstill, did not fret the morals or the mind. It did not over-strain temper. It roused no particular excitements or animosities. The strongest expletive its misadventures evoked was an all-but-pious 'Dear me!' Best of all, it did not dishevel the hair, so that the sweet *croquetière* could simper in happy confusion over her cultivated incompetence and know that always she looked quite ladylike.

Deprived of such outlets of emotion—cigarettes, golf, and the nicer sorts of expletives—as have been available since the safety bicycle and the hockey-stick came to the rescue of cooped-up womanhood, the only real resource she had when breaking down from nerves was—as Jerome K. Jerome used to say—in washing her hair. Possibly many a commandment was kept through that saving exercise. Certainly it was more helpful than fainting, when one was alone or dependent on elderly people. The deprived and limited womanhood of those days simply had to swoon when a crisis was impending. But tight-lacing also had much to do with it.

The curious thing is that those young men, and especially those young women, enjoyed their hirsute abundance. I have even seen a man so proud of his gifts in that respect that he had prisoned his streaming beard under his waistcoat and did not wear collar and tie. As the Moslem stroked his chin and swore by the beard of the Prophet, and the pre-War young Frenchman despised clean-shavenness as womanish, and sprouted his eccentric chin-weed as soon as he could (but let us not forget, it was the clean-shaven English who won the Battle of Waterloo), so our grandfathers felt themselves authoritative and important because of their unbarbered growths.

And how spoiled they were! Men of mere talent, even more than nowadays, posed with impunity as oracles, and often the foolish multitude took the trifles they uttered as original and inspired. They talked elementary science, which often was wrong, with the authority of a brass band and the world cried, 'Wonderful!' The admirable men of those days would never have been

taken with such flattery as spoilt them, for even Alfred Tennyson, who should have known better, looked for the gush of the foolish, while their admirers and followers would never have grovelled before them as humbly as they did, if too much hair had not overcrowded the brains of the period and dulled men's modesty, judgment and wits.

And when those bearded wiseacres joked—how dreadful it was! Read the letterpress of their comic papers and be not unwilling to die! The pun, the riddle, the play upon words, Dumb Crambo, like the humour of very little boys. . . .

Baldness, however—to go to the opposite poll—seems not to bring improvement in wisdom or common sense. A man's head may be as hairless as a York ham without his being thereby any higher in the scale of civilisation. Once I suffered from the gossip of a barber who had views on the true causes of baldness. His head was so hairless that I wondered he could look in the face the bottles of hair-restorer he displayed for sale on his shelves. I must say that never in my presence was any of the stuff sold. How was it possible, with that shining dome blaring-out the tale of its inefficacy?

In the communicative mood, which is the disease of every familiar barber, this man confided to me how it was that the top of his head was a luminous wilderness. In youth he had been a hot-head! His brains had been afire! The heat of passion had burnt out the roots of his hair! This is no exaggeration: those were his very words. As nearly every elderly man, disposed to the vanity of self-esteem, after the fashion of Justice Shallow, likes to pose as having been once a rake; so this bald-head, who probably had never the courage to rob a hen of a chalk-egg, prided himself on his red young naughtiness.

There is one thing anyhow for which every obviously bald man should be admired, that he does not wear a toupée, that poor relation of false hair, the offspring of a wig and the vanity of human decay. It is as betraying an institution as were the curl-papers which, as only the elderly will recall, adorned the morning-heads of poverty before wire-curlers were invented. A wig may be necessary, for not every bare cranium is a thing of æsthetic or intellectual beauty; and ugliness or the evidences of criminality should not be wantonly exposed. But the toupée is otherwise. It hides nothing from the eyes that see; especially as often, when the surrounding hair—the *pukka* hair—has changed colour, the toupée retains

its shade, flaunting a brave chestnut, sometimes tinged with green when the genuine hue has faded.

The discussion, however, has drifted to a minor plane, and it is not fitting that anything so ancient, glorious and universal as hair should be treated disrespectfully. For is it not something to wonder over, this adornment which has been the pride and anxiety of every man and woman in all ranks and stages of civilisation since some primordial ape first felt the dawn of human wonder and awoke?

The only distinguished characteristic of William Rufus was his red hair; Godiva for ever rides through the national imagination with her lovely nudity robed in tresses of gold; Burns's 'lassie wi' the lint-white locks' is beloved by all who have heard his song of her. The streaming hair of Melisande was a part of her poetic tragedy; while every human child knows the fairy tale of the princess imprisoned in the tower who drew up her lover on the ladder of her silken locks. Shakespeare reminds us of the bearded pard; while gourmets are always fussy over the removal or retention of the beard of the oyster. Truly, hair belongs to the immortalities. Scalps may come and skulls may go, but hair goes on for ever. . . . Bellerophon had golden locks, Phoebus had hair of flame; while Rawdon Crawley dyed his whiskers. . . .

It would be possible to speak of other aspects of this ever-coming, ever-going, everlasting acquisition of mankind, from the 'quiff' and the love-lock—those military adornments cultivated by Mr. Thomas Atkins and the Cavalier respectively, which proved serviceable in the fields of battle and the walks of love—to that barbarity at the other extreme, the Prussian brush, the cropped bristles which cover a square Teutonic head.

But let me end on a right note, in tune and keeping with the theme. A natural head of hair has an architectural value. It is the roof of the face; and as we know from the witness of country walks a well-kept thatch makes more attractive the humblest façade; while a neglected roof spoils and ruins. The inartistic or careless or inefficient barber belongs to the criminal class. Sweeney Todd was one; but perhaps he was only being efficient in the wrong way. But the perfect barber, who can do the hair well and be tactful, such as he who when confronted with a scalp containing only three hairs diplomatically asked the customer on which side he should make the parting, his worth is immeasurable; he should stand behind kings, as possibly he will do in his own particular chapter of Olympus.

To be well dressed is to wear inconspicuous clothing. He is a common person whose garb is an occasion for comment, whether it be loud or neglected; so, too, with the hair. It should be cherished; but not allowed to become an enslavement. No hair, black, grey or brown, sparse or naturally luxuriant, need be ugly if thought and care are taken over it; while red hair, the golden red, the burnished coppery red—it is the hue of the helmets of the gods.

But those eccentrics! Ah, no! Affectation is the enemy of a pleasant appearance as well as of art. It mistakes notoriety for fame and accepts a newspaper-paragraph as an instalment of earthly sublimity. It is a mark of the decadence which lurks on the hinder side of competent achievement. Remember the pre-War promise of a fashion of green hair and blue hair, as now some women have red or green finger-nails. The fatal 1914 which prevented those abominations thereby brought some good as well as much bad, showing that occasionally there is virtue in all things. Even a bald scalp may reflect an invisible halo, and he was a genuine martyr who first took to his chest the scratchy misery of a hair-shirt.

SUPPRESSION.

BY E. LLOYD BARRITT.

ALL his short life Livy had been bullied and browbeaten by an elder brother. The relationship was a little uncertain, for though Raymond's feathers were completely white they lacked that dazzling quality which reminded one of inaccessible snow-clad summits under a blazing noonday sun. Besides that, he was much heavier in build, lacking the slim elegance that at first glance proclaimed Livy a pure-bred Leghorn. Raymond relied on brute force, Livy on quickness and intelligence. As so often happens in this world, Raymond's strength invariably intervened to wrest away the prize from Livy's brains. Livy was always the first to discover a succulent morsel and pounce on it, and just as surely Raymond would snatch it from him without giving him the opportunity for even one good peck. So that it seemed Livy was always foraging for Raymond's benefit. At meal-times when they lined up at the feeding-trough Livy's quickness always won for him the best place. But before he could gobble down two mouthfuls Raymond would come and stand on him, scratching and kicking with his great claws till poor Livy could bear it no longer and had to wriggle away out of the line, thus ceding his place of vantage to the unscrupulous Raymond. And, of course, Raymond took care to remain there until the trough was empty.

The birds were overcrowded in the run and there was a good deal of bad-tempered pecking at one another to get out of the way. In this respect again Livy was the sufferer until the happy day came when he made his great discovery. Fleeing incontinent before the might of Raymond's beak, he flapped his wings and took a flying jump, landing on top of the fowl-house. He soon discovered to his delight that Raymond could not follow him up there and promptly indulged in a prolonged chortling for which Raymond duly extorted payment when at last his victim was obliged to descend. Altogether life was very difficult, but Livy was by nature a happy little soul and managed to extract moments of compensation. That was before the moral persecution set in. Poor Livy had yet to learn that there are worse things than short rations and pecks on the

neck. There is frustration, the suppression of the æsthetic side of life. It was this that nearly brought him to an untimely end.

One spring morning, safe on the hen-house, warmed by the sun and intrigued by the song of a near-by blackbird, he flapped his wings and much to his own surprise found himself beginning to crow.

'Cock-a-doo . . .' he said and then stopped, uncertain how to go on. He knew there was a bit more to it, but he wanted to get the notes right and there was no elder bird within earshot to teach him. He liked the sound of it and tried again: 'Cock-a-doo . . .' The others all stopped scratching and listened with interest, but Raymond bustled up, his neck-feathers sticking out in all directions, bursting with rage because Livy was out of reach of his beak. Livy simply did not care. It was his discovery and he was going to perfect it and enjoy it as often as he wished. This at least, he thought, was something Raymond could not filch away. He was going to try for those end notes now. How did it go?

'Cock-a-doo . . .'

He was interrupted by the most hideous squawk he had ever heard. Something like the alarm signal the old hen used to let out when the cat pretended to chase her, only ten times more powerful. Of course, it was Raymond, standing on a heap of stones and trying to make himself important. Livy determined to take no notice. He quietened down his nerves and began again.

'Cock-a-doo . . .'

Again that ear-splitting shriek, this time in triplicate, 'Squawk-quawk-quawk!'

It came over Livy with a sense of utter impotence that Raymond thought he was crowing! No doubt he thought he was doing it quite nicely, much better than Livy in fact. The others were all regarding him with awe and admiration. Not Livy. Raymond. Soon Raymond would claim the credit for having made the discovery and they would all believe him. Livy knew in his heart that it would be so. The gawks! Slowly, slowly his heart sank down and down, like a stone dropping into soft mud. No more crowing for him that day.

In the days which followed Livy sometimes found sufficient courage to try again, but always with the same result. Raymond never let him get beyond the first three notes. Slow as Raymond was at most things, he was quick enough on this point. He knew well enough that his prestige was at stake, and once Livy had taken up his position on the roof, Raymond stood waiting ready for him.

Livy grew to dread that terrible squawk coming inevitably as the crack of doom as soon as he reached his third note. He knew now he would never be allowed to have his crow out. He gave up even trying to crow and let Raymond have it all his own way. Raymond went about splitting the ears of the neighbourhood and everyone said, 'Isn't it clever of him! He found it all out himself!'

Livy pined and grew thinner than ever. And then in the dead of night he felt himself seized, stuffed into a sack, carried and bumped a long distance and finally put into a strange, dark house, where he sensed, rather than saw, hostile shapes perched above him. He dared not move in the dark, so cowered trembling in a corner all night.

The dawn revealed six figures sitting on the perch, six bulky figures, heavy in build, dark in colouring.

'Six Raymonds!' thought poor Livy. 'This is worse than ever!'

Warily he edged closer to the chink of light which betrayed the position of the shutter. Immediately a scandalised murmuring broke out from the six outraged goddesses aloft.

'Did you see that, my dear?'

'I thought at first it was a piece of white paper or something, blown in from outside.'

'A positive outrage. . . . I couldn't have imagined . . . never experienced anything of the sort in all our lives before!'

'And look at it, my dear . . . no colour at all . . . like a pillow-case fallen off a clothes-line . . . quite definitely anæmic!'

'Its comb is red enough . . . but that ridiculous tail!'

'Its figure altogether . . . perfectly absurd! All odds and ends. Those lanky legs and no body at all. Not an ounce of good meat anywhere, as you might say!'

Livy felt he could stand no more of this.

'I'd have you to know,' he began bravely, 'I come of a very good family, I do, . . .' But the six voices rose simultaneously to an overpowering volume.

'Good family, indeed! Don't mention good family to us! We are the Miss Rhodes, the six beautiful Miss Rhodes, renowned not only for our beauty but for the purity of our stock and the perfection of our manners. We have been brought up in a select atmosphere, carefully segregated and guarded from all contamination and not allowed to associate with any . . . er . . . any . . . er . . .'

'With anyone at all, I should say,' Livy interposed cheekily and, seeing the shutter swing open, dashed out into the run before the spinster ladies could lumber down from their perch.

The feeding-trough was of a generous size and well filled. But his joy of it was short lived. For the six Misses Rhodes, advancing with unhurried deliberation, pecked him quietly and efficiently until he ran away and hid behind some bushes.

To his relief their breakfast was soon over. With ponderous, stately movements they went off to scratch in some rough ground, keeping up the pretence of being oblivious of his presence. The wind, blowing their feathers about, revealed every shade of chestnut, copper beech and russet. Behind their backs Livy slunk back again to the feeding-trough and found to his surprise and delight that it was half-full. What sort of fowls were these, to go in lofty scorn of their breakfast? Aristocrats, indeed!

That day for the first time in his life Livy had enough to eat. This was no little consolation to him as he stood shivering all night in his corner of the fowl-house, for the ladies had made it clear that the perch belonged to them. The next morning was warmer, one of those delicious days of spring all blue and gold, when rays of hope and gladness force their way into the lives of even the most cruelly suppressed. The hens had pecked him away from the trough, as before, but he was no longer hungry or anxious about the prospect of food. He was looking for a nice, sunny place where he could wait until the hens had finished. The newly tarred roof of the fowl-house gleamed. Livy measured its height with his eye. Higher than the one he had been used to, but with an effort he thought he might manage it. He spread his wings, took a running jump and scrambled rather ungracefully to the ridge.

The hens looked up from their feeding more scandalised than ever. In their experience such things were not done. Livy felt the exhilaration that comes from being on a height. The warmth of the sun struck upon him like something tangible. He opened wide his wings to admit it, stood up on tiptoe, and before he knew what he was doing, began:

'Cock-a-doo . . .'

He broke off suddenly and looked round for Raymond. There was no Raymond, but there was an interruption, nevertheless. A stir, a movement, a terrified clucking, what the newspaper men call a sensation among the hens: 'Heavens!' they exclaimed, 'it's a man!' Then a petrified, deathly silence and there they all were,

huddled together in one corner, motionless, their faces turned towards him with fixed, horrified fascination.

'All right,' thought Livy, 'I'll show them!' Then aloud: 'Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo!' And again and again, nursing the two last notes like an opera-singer, making them more and more certain, until they streamed out sweet and clear, slipping through the lambent air like a gleaming javelin flung by a practised hand.

'Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo!' Until his heart was eased of all its misery and suppression and the memory of Raymond had vanished in the sunlight like a short, unhappy dream.

'Cock-a-doodle-doo!'

Light of heart and without a care in the world he jumped down and stepped jauntily up to the feeding-trough. Standing at the back of it, facing the hens, he was about to begin his meal when some new instinct asserted itself. Livy was carefully bred and his family had had for generations a tradition of chivalry towards the weaker sex, but the instinct only found full play when they really were the weaker. Livy looked across at the huddle of scared females and kerkled encouragement. Their heads shot in and out of their neck-feathers and they clucked nervously. Livy answered them with the courtesy for which his breed was famous.

'Let bygones be bygones,' he said, and renewed his invitation. Slowly, tentatively, two by two they approached the trough, curtsying to him and requesting his permission to resume their interrupted meal. He stood back and encouraged them until at last they had all taken one or two timid pecks. Then he fell to with a will, as if to prove that a hearty appetite need not be regarded as a negation of good breeding.

That night he slept warm and comfortable in the middle of the perch, with the hens ranged three on either side of him.

MORPHIA.

BY J. N. GOLDSMITH.

I MUST have survived the operation, for I see a ceiling and dis-tempered walls, hear agreeable voices. Outside in the corridor, that will be the Head Sister's cheery tone of command, a captain's rallying voice. 'Up you get, Forwards!' she might say to a hockey side, and the line would go up the field.

In my room, Matron and the Irish Sister are talking in low tones; they think I have not come round. The man next door is desperately ill; Sister saw the heart attack coming on, and met the challenge to her skill and resolution; the hypodermic saved his life. I say to myself, 'Gallant fighters your race, and under many flags'; and now it is not the Bourbon lilies I think of, but, for a moment, of an older banner.

Matron approves what has been done, and the brogue is richer as the report becomes more technical. These people, surgeon, anæsthetist and sisters, are Internationals at the top of their form. But it is all routine and not romance. Matron has arranged everything as far ahead as 7.30 p.m., the day after to-morrow.

They come to look at me. Delirious, am I? And now they are saying good night. I ask Matron feebly how much morphia must be given so that a patient can write like De Quincey. Matron shakes her head, it is in my case a lethal or even an embalming dose. 'Good night!'

The Irish nurse arranges my pillows. This is an opportunity to play the delirious patient. I try a languid question, 'What is the colour of your eyes?' I get a reply, but it is not in English. It is her mother tongue, she does not know her patient has fished in Kerry. 'A fathom,' she says, 'a fathom of sunlit sea.' Well, men have drowned in shallower water. Good night, good night!

The night sister comes in—that tall Presbyterian, once a missionary among the Buddhists in China. She would like to stop me talking, but there is a story to tell. John the hospital porter was a boxer, you could guess it by his stride and reach. He had told me of his last fight, how, trained to the last ounce, he entered

the ring in the semi-final of the Army Championship, shook hands with his opponent, and knew no more until he woke up in bed.

Sister agrees the story has a proper anæsthetic flavour, and then tells me of the hospital routine.

'So, if we are ready for the day sisters by six o'clock,' I say, 'we shall acquire merit?'

'Let the day sisters acquire merit,' she replies; 'they need it.'

She puts my bell handy, says 'all set for the night,' and goes.

But I am not going to sleep, nor am I delirious. I will float away, if this morphia is any good. Powers of Space-Time! listen! I speak your jargon. I am an aged four-dimensional bubble, full of ether; or merely a ripple in the continuum; or, if you insist, only the probability that a wave is there at all. Give time a minus sign; let me go back to those lazy days when games mattered most; let me umpire one over in a first-class match of long ago, before everyone made centuries and bowled swingers.

No, not one of the Old Man's, a myth already in his lifetime; nor that over of Pougher's; nor the awful one of Trumble's, when Jessop was nearly stumped, and the policeman sat down on the grass and cried, while old men died all round the ground—no, an uneventful over in a drowsy afternoon.

It is soon done. I am walking from square leg towards the wicket. A long white coat flaps round my legs, I notice a smell of hair oil from my old bowler hat, my steps are slow and dignified as becomes the judge of fact and law.

There is a brooding peace over the ground. Thousands of men are looking on in silence, each with the air of an acknowledged expert considering a familiar case. Thus and not otherwise, they seem to agree, is a good ball bowled and played.

The fielders move slowly into their new positions. Nothing could ever be important enough to interrupt this traditional ritual of changing patterns of attentive, white-clad figures, to alter these proceedings, which have not changed for generations. Here the minutes glide away and perish, but they are not counted against us. Time will not be precise; the old groundsman leans on his scythe to watch the game.

As I reach the wicket the other umpire addresses me as Bill, and asks me to straighten the stumps, which to his mind lean ever so slightly to the off. I do so, and wonder if I am masquerading as the old Nottingham medium-pace right-hander.

Sauter of Sussex is the batsman at my end, but my immediate responsibilities are the bowler and the batsman confronting him. At first glance, I do not recognise either of them. Then the bowler's run up and swing, the stride beside me as the left arm is flung far back, the White Rose on his faded cap, leave no room for doubt. He is Wile, no less, third and greatest of the line of slow left-handers. The ball cleaves the air in front of me in a lordly curve, pitches a length on the off stump, comes off more quickly than I expected, straightening out with the spin, and is met by a long smooth forward stroke. There is a musical plonk, and mid-off earns applause for stopping a ball, travelling fast along the ground, wide of his left hand. Such forward-play, compact of force and grace, inevitably calls to mind two men, No. 1 in the batting order of Somerset and Lancashire, and the cap badge, a Red Rose, tells me Rhuse of Lancashire played that shot.

The crowd appreciate all this : the men from offices can imagine summer-terms when Rhuse perfected his strokes at the nets, on countless sunny afternoons ; whilst Wile has formed his technique in matches all over the world.

I change a penny from my left-hand pocket to my right, as Wile bowls. After four pennies, there have been four balls on the off stump. Mid-off and mid-on have been brilliant. Wile plays his clever harmonies on flight and length ; but, with equal skill, Rhuse hastens or delays his lunge at the ball. The fourth ball dipped curiously, and even a good club bat would have been caught-and-bowled.

I think I follow Wile's idea. Two or three overs hence, when the forward stroke has become mechanical, he will bowl one apparently the same, which will turn a lot and quickly, and Rhuse may be caught at short slip. That is why Wile has not given away how much spin the wicket will take. The monotonous attack prepares a future disaster, if the wicket is not too easy in its pace.

I murmur, ' Might have been cut, rolled and watered on purpose for him ! ' Wile takes no notice—a serious artist, absorbed in his work.

I see an opposite threat in this contest of art. It is that Rhuse will reach out with more severity ; the ball will be forced away for runs ; presently Wile will find there is no safe length he can bowl.

As I stand at my wicket, it seems to me that there are con-

ventions in first-class cricket of which I am ignorant. Clearly Wile is not trying to bowl out Rhuse, nor is Rhuse attempting to hit Wile, although his wrists and shoulders come in beautifully together, and his forward play is formidable enough. Most likely the two men are just testing the wicket and each other's strength.

Now I am watching the fifth ball. The easy swing is the same as before, but the ball is faster and comes across quickly from the off. Admirably bowled as it was, this ball cannot trouble a first-class bat. Away it goes, behind the square-leg umpire, for a safe and leisurely two runs.

As Rhuse slides his bat over the crease he says something agreeable. The game is full of small civilities.

Wile smiles a little grimly.

I remark, to no one in particular, 'Edged it a bit!' For indeed we shall not know, until the Last Day, whether a firm defensive stroke was intended, or a scoring shot.

Wile maintains an impressive silence. The ball is dead now and in his left hand. He is examining his spikes, while Rhuse is standing out of his ground and looking at the field.

He knows them all, of course, coverpoint is a dead shot; extra-cover is a sprinter; mid-off, ah, mid-off can throw like a gun—he and Wile have held the pass before now, when their country's defeat seemed certain.

Rhuse gazes beyond the covers: after all, that is where even the best slow bowling belongs—past that unguarded, smooth turf, where the sparrows are hopping towards the sandwich-eaters. It is good to be alive, and batting, on this sultry afternoon. The bat responds to his grip. Sir, you chose well, it is a charmed blade.

In the Suffolk water meadow,
Fairies danced around the willow,
Salix magica!

He is timing Wile perfectly, has scored off his faster ball, he ought to make a big score before evening.

I say to myself this is the spirit of the game—batting just too good for the best bowling. 'Bat for ever, graceful Lancashire!'

But my conscience troubles me: these are not the thoughts of an impartial judge.

I know the remedy. The wish must be neutralised. My mind must make equal oscillations to either side. In this way arbitral

equilibrium will be restored. Therefore I wish fervently that Wile will take a wicket with his next ball.

What this will be, I think I know—repertoire—the slower, higher ball that looks exactly like a half-volley. But far from it, it is not one! Wile bowls it perfectly, but Rhuse will not be deceived, he knows all about slow bowling.

'Fitzjames's blade is sword and shield,' no doubt; but, when Roderick Dhu risked his last desperate onslaught, there was an awful mix-up. Why should not the last ball be a supreme effort from that past master, Wile? An *obiter dictum* from Bill is not to be despised, and, in what I hope is good Notts, I mutter some advice to the bowler. The advice is presumptuous, I know—and anyhow, the effort would be too exhausting for a man who must bowl all day.

Apparently Wile has not heard, for he waves extra cover deeper and wider—deeper still: that will do. Long-on near the screen acknowledges and takes up a fine adjustment. So far he has fielded nothing but a piece of luncheon paper; but he is Dive, whose delight it is to swoop along the chord to the radius and cut off the four. He might be an Australian.

Now the field is placed for the slow ball. I see Rhuse smile—'surely in vain the net is spread!'

Ah, my batsman wants his guard confirmed. I take great care over this. He thinks he has got middle and leg, and thanks me with a tiny gesture. I have given him leg stump. He will need it!

I trust the balance is again at zero, but the fact is I am not a good umpire! I feel there is something wrong: I used to bowl a bit myself. Now, as Wile is walking to the end of his run, I wish I could say to Rhuse: 'Don't you believe it! Something very sinister is coming your way. As soon as he bowls, out to it, man! As far as you can and a foot farther, or you are l.b.w. bowled, stumped, caught at the wicket or at slip—one, or more or all at once!'

But Wile is going to bowl. The preamble is if possible more easy—almost listless—deliberately nonchalant.

Rhuse is a sunny picture of flannels, pads and bat—poised—wary. If the slower ball is over-pitched, he is ready for an off-drive to the palings, and let Dive sprint his fastest across the screen!

Wile's last step is beside me. He takes a deep breath, his

swing has begun. Something hums in the air—is past Rhuse before I can blink.

Rhuse, gallant blade, came forward—bat and foot and shoulder ; yet what it was he did not know : he lost it in the air. Still out he came to smother it, to the extent of his long reach—was too late for that pace and break.

The off-bail shot up, its yellow varnish glistening in the sun. The crowd thinks he is bowled.

From the wicket-keeper there is a savage appeal to the square-leg umpire ; and then another, as the leg bail flies up when Rhuse stumbles back from that long thrust. Two attempts at a stump.

My learned brother at square leg shakes his head slowly, twice.

At my end, there is an appeal from mid-on ; and a voice from the deep, which I ignore. 'Mid-on,' I would like to say, 'my dear fool, do not bawl at me ! We were, for a moment, in the presence of sheer beauty, the perfect line of flight, a masterpiece of concealed acceleration and spin !'

There are issues for the court : questions of leg before, or of a catch at the wicket. I agree that the ball turned as it passed the outflung bat ; I agree that the ball just brushed the top of the right pad, as this masked the wicket. Truly, he was not l.b.w. if he touched the ball, *cadit questio* ; but, if so, caught at the wicket he certainly was, and must begin his journey to the pavilion.

I keep my hands firmly in my pockets, whilst I decide that Rhuse was not caught. Here I do not rely on the principle that two solid bodies can never come into contact. What happened, in my judgment, was that the ball failed to touch his bat by a fraction so small, containing so many figures that eternity would be too short to write it down—the extreme limit where contact just ceases.

Nevertheless, I hold that the ball was deflected and outwards. The caught-at-the-wicket claim is, therefore, dismissed, the l.b.w. appeal likewise. It was my opinion that the ball would just miss the stumps after the minute deflection already considered, but I wish it had been a no-ball. I shake my head solemnly, some umpires jerk the chin skywards for 'Not Out,' but in my inexperience the head shake sideways is better. I do not forget to call the over. I say, 'The ball is over, Gentlemen.'

Wile did not appeal ; indeed, he has not said a word to me the whole time.

Mid-on is discontented. He says, 'I suppose you'd give 'em

out caught off the splice ?' This is, of course, the superior limit; but it is as well to say nothing of this to mid-on, who might become personal about limits.

It is outside my jurisdiction, but I think Rhuse was stumped the first time : you never saw a fast ball gathered, and the wicket put down, so quickly. Anyhow, the ball was quite unplayable—forward, back, or dead bat ; and short slip would have snapped up a catch if Rhuse had played from his middle-and-leg-guard.

As I leave the wicket I think of telephoning my solicitors to enquire whether I am liable for damages. I mean if either Rhuse or Wile (or both), or the M.C.C., bring an action for ' Wrong Guard.' It is an awkward point. Bill will have to defend the action. The wicket-keeper, Gild, will swear that the guard given by the umpire was not the guard asked for by Rhuse. Gild, when cross-examined, will say that it was not his duty to warn the batsman, or indeed, converse with him (Rule 42, ' incommode the striker by any noise '). He thought, he will say, that Rhuse was more likely to get out when playing from the wrong guard, so said nothing. He was surprised by the very fast break-back ; he thought a slow ball was coming, but it did not worry him. Yes, Rhuse was out, stumped, to the first appeal ; but he did not expect to get the verdict from the other umpire, it was too quick. Bill was always a good umpire. And so on. The judge will point out that there is nothing in the Rules about guard, whether right or wrong, and that a batsman might go on taking guard until the time for drawing stumps. The powers vested in the umpires by Rule 43, relate to unfair play ; but taking guard is a preliminary to play, whether the guard given be fair or unfair, and not part of the play itself. He may hold that the guard given by the umpire had not the alignment, azimuth or compass bearing, demanded by the batsman ; but this fact, in the absence of any Rule, does not enable him to award damages. But will he take this view ? I have walked nearly as far as square leg now.

I have umpired my over. Time is up. I must go.

I shall have a telegram to-night, with Rhuse's score and Wile's analysis, at the banquet in the Hall of the Arquebusiers Company. John, the prize-fighter, is toast master. By permission, he wears the uniform of the Welch Fusiliers, with a lance-corporal's stripe—a rank he held for one day. He is wearing, too, the Military Medal and the Croix de Guerre. There are a lot of medals : Matron has invited 100 ex-stretcher bearers of the R.A.M.C., to balance

the tables where 100 nurses are seated. All the Internationals are here. The retired welter-weight stands behind Matron's chair: 'My lords and gentlemen, crave silence, the Toast is the Nursing Profession.'

The door of my room opens. It is the Head Sister—that cool and charming professional. 'What do you think you are doing? Making speeches? Now eat your breakfast.'

I do so meekly.

TINTAGEL.

WHEN I was young Tintagel
Was not a name to me:—
It was a song abounding
In grace of chivalry,
A chime of bells far-sounding
From realms beneath the sea.

For me the word, Tintagel,
Brought gorse to sudden bloom,
Called knights from hall and manor
To quicken hill and combe,
Placed in my hand a banner
And on my head a plume.

Tintagel . . . O, Tintagel . . .
Those syllables avail
No more to cheat with seeming:
The chimes—the chanting—fail
To set furred pennants streaming,
Long-rusted armour gleaming:
The world has done with dreaming,
And no man seeks the Grail.

M. SINTON LEITCH.

LONG ODDS.

V. SAND.

BY RICHARD FITZGERALD FINDLAY.

*' Let us thank the Lord for his bounties all,
 For the brave old days of pleasure and pain,
 When the world for both of us seemed too small—
 Though the love was void and the hate was vain—
 Though the word was bitter between us twain,
 And the bitter word was kin to the blow,
 For her gloss and ripple of rich gold rain,
 For her velvet crimson and satin snow—
 Though we never shall know the old days again.'*

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

It was very hot in the midday sun. There was no shade anywhere, except in the fort, and in the low, flat-topped buildings scattered about it. But the fort and the buildings were deserted, and so were the double-walled native tents, where, too, there was shade. The whole garrison of the outpost, white officers and men, native troops and their women and children, was out on the shore, laughing and talking excitedly, cursing and sweating in the heat. On the short jetty several soldiers were already pushing the small, hand-driven crane along its rails, getting it into position to unload. Half a mile out to sea a small steamboat was standing in to shore, with black smoke belching from her squat funnel and streaming southwards on the hot northerly wind. She would be alongside the jetty in five minutes or so, unloading her cargo of food and water. And then in two hours at most she would be gone, and they would not see her again for a couple of weeks. But in the meanwhile she would bring to that little garrison some sweet contact with the far-off world, a touch of home. Beyond that few of them wished to think.

Toby was standing rather apart from the others, with his hands in the pockets of his khaki shorts and his topee tilted forward over his eyes. After a while the sun glinting on the water made him blink, and he turned around so that his back was towards the sea. He looked at the old white fort with the Union Jack fluttering above it and at the hangar with its partly open canvas

doors flapping in the wind. He saw the air-screw boss of one of the aeroplanes shining like a jewel in the sunlight through the partly open doors and he looked at this for so long that when he turned his eyes away beyond the hangar he could see nothing for a moment except a lot of dancing black specks. When the specks cleared away he saw the ring of native tents, and beyond them in the middle distance the barbed wire which surrounded the camp, and beyond the barbed wire, as far as his eye could reach, merging ultimately and almost imperceptibly into the golden-blue edge of the sky, the desert. But as he looked at that illimitable expanse of sand, desolate and yet somehow menacing under the pale-blue, metallic dome of the sky, it changed beyond recognition. It was a ninety-acre meadow, hushed and still on an Irish summer morning. He stood there, ankle deep in the lush sweet grass, and gazed around him at the trees, their branches sweeping the ground in leafy luxuriance. The long-legged colt standing a few yards away raised his head as he approached. But he did not move, and Toby came up to him quietly and patted his neck and passed his hand down his nose to the warm, dark muzzle. The colt looked at him timidly with his large brown eyes, and Toby wished that he had a piece of sugar in his pocket to give him, and felt strangely happy and exalted waiting there with the smell of the green grass and the colt's brown coat in his nostrils and expecting to see Rosemary come out of the house at any moment. He looked up and there she was coming through the open doorway with her short tweed skirt swinging about her slim legs and her teeth very white between her red lips as she smiled at him. He raised his hand to wave to her and the colt jinked away and raced down the meadow, throwing up his heels every few yards. He heard Rosemary laugh. Her laugh had an odd sound and he could not understand why, but suddenly he realised that it was not Rosemary's laughter that he could hear but the coughing grunt of a camel in the lines behind the hangar. He smelt the pungent reek of camels and the sickening stench of a dead camel which some of the Arab troops had buried three days before but which must have been uncovered in the sand-storm of the previous night. A gust of wind blew a cloud of sand into the air, stinging his face and his bare knees and making his eyes water and smart. He screwed them up and swung round towards the sea, hearing voices raised all of a sudden in sharp orders.

When he had got the sand out of his eyes he saw the steamboat almost alongside the jetty. Her screw was threshing the water as her engines went astern. Two or three of the crew were throwing fenders overside. The engine-room telegraph rang out from the bridge and the beat of the engines ceased as a couple of soldiers made the bow and stern ropes fast to the bollards on the jetty. The boat rose and fell gently on the long swell, the fenders creaking and squeaking against the rough stone. A tall man in a white drill suit and a snow-white topee stepped up on to the bulwarks and leapt across the short intervening space between ship and jetty without waiting for the gangway to be put out. He was smiling broadly as he shook hands with some of the officers on the jetty. He came along with them towards the shore and stopped for a minute or two to talk to the C.O., holding his topee in his left hand. Toby stood watching him and after a while he looked round and saw Toby standing there and waved his hand. He looked away again and went on talking to the C.O. for a few moments. Then he started to walk along the shore towards Toby, quite slowly, looking about him and nodding at the men as he passed them. Toby got the idea that there was some reason for his coming along so slowly, as though he were trying to postpone their meeting as long as possible. 'But that's absurd,' he thought almost at once. When Bill was about two yards away he suddenly looked straight at Toby. His eyes were in shadow under his topee, but his mouth was smiling. He seemed to hesitate for a second and then came forward quickly, holding out his hand. Toby took it and gripped it hard.

'Well, Bill.'

'Well, Toby.'

'It's good to see you back again, Bill.'

'It's good to see you again, too. Not quite so good being back, though.'

'No, of course not. Have a good time?'

'Marvellous time.'

They stood looking at each other for a bit, both smiling. Toby could not see Bill's eyes very clearly, in the shadow. Suddenly Bill put his hand over them, and lowered his head.

'The sun on the sand. Hurts my eyes. Damn stupid, I ought to be used to it,' he said, laughing.

'Oh well, you've been away for two months. You're out of practice.'

'Let's go over to the quarters, shall we? Get out of the sun.'

'All right.'

The sand was quite hard close to the sea, but when they had gone a few yards it became much softer so that their feet sank into it and they slipped back a little with every step they took. The clank and rattle of the crane came from behind them as the crew started to unload.

'Did you stop in the island at all?' Toby asked.

'Only one night. The P. & O. got in at four p.m. yesterday.'

'Not much of a place, anyway.'

'All right after this place. Not much after Home, though.'

'Lord, no.'

They walked on in silence for a while. Toby could not get rid of the feeling that there was something peculiar in Bill's manner. There was certainly a constraint between them which had never been there before, he thought. It prevented him from asking the question which he had been longing to ask ever since the smoke of the steamboat had appeared above the empty horizon.

When they reached the living quarters of the Detached Flight, close to the fort, they went into Toby's room. The windows on the north side were barred and shuttered, and the shutters of the southern windows were half-closed, too, so it was fairly dark in the room. There was a thin layer of sand on the floor, which crunched a little under their feet as they walked on it. It had drifted into small piles in all the corners. But it was pleasantly cool in the room, after the heat outside. Bill sat down in one of the long cane chairs and put his feet up on the foot-rest. 'That's better,' he said. He took off his topee and began to fan himself with it. Toby went to the door and clapped his hands. When the Arab steward appeared he told him to bring some lager beer. He came back into the room and sat down on a battered tin uniform case under the window, swinging his topee between his knees. He looked at Bill, expecting him to start a conversation of some sort. He must have a lot to say about what he had been doing, he thought. But Bill did not say anything. Toby wished that the Arab steward would come back with the drinks. He wished that anything would happen that would break that unnatural silence. After a minute or two he got up to go to the door again, but at that moment the steward came in with two long glasses on a tray. He shuffled through the doorway, his soft slippers grating on the sandy floor. When he had gone out again Bill swung his long legs off the foot-

rest and sat leaning forward, with his hand holding the glass resting on his knee. He looked across at Toby and raised his glass, smiling a queer, twisted sort of smile. He put the glass to his lips and took a long pull at it, keeping his eyes on Toby's.

'Gosh, that's good,' he said, lowering the glass to his knee. He jerked his head towards Toby's glass.

'Why aren't you drinking, Toby? Do you want to wait until it gets full of sand? Knock it back, old chap, knock it back; we'll have another,' he said. He drank the remainder of his beer, put his glass down on the floor, and clapped his hands. 'Achmed, more beer, you old blackguard!' he shouted at the top of his voice.

Toby took his cigarette-case out of his pocket. He felt quite sick with apprehension, for some reason or other. When he held a match for Bill's cigarette his hand was shaking so much that he nearly dropped it. But Bill did not seem to notice. He was talking about some polo he had played in London and Dublin. He was being very amusing about it, too, but Toby was in no mood to be amused. He wanted to ask that question, and he was afraid to ask it.

'I went to Johnny O'Rourke's wedding just before I came away,' Bill said. 'We gave them the most terrific send-off. They eventually motored off to Dover covered with confetti, old boots, and confusion. One of the ripest functions I've ever attended,' he added, taking a glass of beer from the tray the Arab steward was holding out to him.

'Bill,' said Toby.

'Yes?'

'Did you see Rosemary?'

'Rosemary? Yes, I saw her.'

He was very serious suddenly. He looked past Toby, through the half-closed shutters of the window behind his head.

'Congratulate me, Toby.'

'What?'

'I'm engaged.'

'Engaged?'

'Yes, to Rosemary.'

Toby looked at the ray of sunlight on the floor of the room. He saw the fine sand eddying and shifting on the brown linoleum. He saw the sand-motes dancing in the beam of bright sunlight and the golden-brown hairs on Bill's strong hands, holding his glass.

His eyes travelled slowly up Bill's body until they rested on his face, dark in the shadow. The sound of the steamboat being unloaded came faintly down the wind. From nearer at hand came the chatter of native voices raised in a sudden altercation, strident and meaningless. Sounds from another world, Toby thought. Echoes of waves beating vainly on some far-off, rocky shore. Æons of time passed over him and he still sat there, staring at Bill's face, dark in the shadow.

He leant forward a little, so that he could see more clearly. Yes, it was Bill all right. He started to laugh.

'That's a good joke,' he said, laughing.

His voice sounded rather harsh, probably because his mouth was so dry, he thought. He took a mouthful of beer, and passed his tongue over his lips. There was sand on his lips. Bill was shaking his head slowly from side to side. He was still looking past Toby, through the partly open window shutters.

'I wasn't joking,' he said.

It was very still in the room. But then Toby heard a sound coming from somewhere close by, like the sound of muffled drums. It was several moments before he realised that it was the beating of his heart. He got up quickly and stood over Bill, looking down at him. Bill did not move.

'Why didn't you tell me you loved her?' Toby asked. The words nearly choked him, and he swallowed hard.

'I didn't know I did until I saw her this time,' Bill said. His voice was quiet and toneless.

'You needn't trouble to lie about it.'

'I didn't know, I tell you. And I don't know that you've got any right to take this line about it. You never told her you loved her.'

'You know why I didn't tell her. You know I didn't want her to tie herself up to me when I was coming out to this God-forsaken place, and thought I might never come back. I thought it would be easier for us both if I waited.'

'How do you know she loved you?'

'Do you think one can make a mistake about a thing like that? One always knows.'

'Well, she loves me now. You were a fool to wait. I wouldn't have waited.'

'Good God, and I thought you were a friend. Get to hell out of my room, damn your soul.'

'That's all right with me, if that's how you feel about it.'

After Bill had gone out Toby still stood where he had been standing, looking down at the long cane chair. The sweat was running down his face and dripping on to the floor. Suddenly he felt his legs trembling under him, and sat down abruptly in the chair. The agony of his thoughts made him screw up his eyes for a moment, and he covered his face with his hands. 'Oh, Rosemary,' he said brokenly.

The wind stirred the sand on the worn brown floor, adding it grain by grain to the piles in the corners of the room. It made a melancholy sound, like the faint rustling of dry, dead leaves.

It was a very hot summer. All day long, from soon after dawn until dusk, the sun beat down pitilessly from the light-blue, cloudless sky. The wind blew incessantly, sometimes from the north, again from the south, and always it was hot as the blast from an open fire-box door. The desert danced and shimmered in the heat waves. And every now and again the wind would get up and the northern or southern horizon would darken and then after a brief interval the whole world would be blotted out in a howling sand-storm. Then the men of the garrison would move about in the brown obscurity with lowered heads, their eyes and mouths and nostrils filled with sand, dim, puny figures facing the wrath of God. And after hours and sometimes days the wind would gradually drop and they would see the sun again, at first blood-red and fiery through the sand haze and then at last in all his golden glory. They could sit down then and eat without tasting the gritty taste of sand in all the food, and breathe without choking, and see the desert stretching away into seeming infinity, and even its tragic desolation seemed good to them, brought back from darkness. As for the heat it was nothing now: they would think for a while, brought back from darkness.

Early one morning in July Joe Gaddesby and Frank Stuart set out to hunt gazelle. They were tired of tinned food, and thought that some fresh-killed venison would do everybody in the garrison a lot of good. Toby Quin walked down to the camel lines with them to see them start off.

'Why don't you come with us, Toby? Take your mind off this place for a bit; you're lookin' a bit peaked,' Joe Gaddesby said.

'No, I don't think I will, thanks. I've got some things to see about,' Toby said.

'Oh, come on, Toby, don't take life so darned seriously,' Frank Stuart said, putting his arm around Toby's shoulders.

Toby turned his face away for a moment or two. Frank Stuart felt his shoulders twitch under his arm. But when he looked round again he was smiling with his lips. His eyes were not smiling. They were very bright and looked hot, Frank thought.

'You want to look out for Abdullah Khan's men. They say he's on the warpath again,' Toby said.

'Oh, we're takin' twenty of the boys with us. We'll be all right. And we shan't be twenty miles away, either,' Joe Gaddesby told him.

The camels scented the three men as they approached. They turned their heads sideways curiously and looked at them, making ready to rise to their feet. The Arab sergeant-major salaamed, smiling broadly, his white teeth and dark eyes flashing in his brown, black-bearded face. The twenty Arab soldiers were standing beside their camels with their rifles slung around their shoulders, ready to mount.

'Well, good hunting to you,' Toby said.

'Thanks, Toby. Sorry you won't come with us. Still, have it your own way,' Joe Gaddesby answered.

The whole party mounted their camels. The animals rose grunting to their feet and moved off in a long string towards the gate in the barbed-wire fence. The men on their backs swayed easily to their rolling, pitching gait. For a few moments the faint creaking of the saddles and the soft pad of feet on the sand came back to Toby as he stood looking after them, then died away. After a bit he turned round and walked towards the hangar.

Joe Gaddesby said to Frank Stuart:

'Toby's lookin' pretty sick, don't you think? He ought to go on leave.'

'I don't know that he's sick so much as worried. He's got something on his mind; I don't know what.'

'What's the trouble between him and Bill Fedamore?'

'Don't know. Must be something pretty big; they're cutting one another dead in these days.'

'I say, Frank, I don't like that, do you? I mean to say, old friends, and so on, what? Bad thing, too, to start havin' rows with fellows in a place like this. Plenty to fret the nerves without that, I mean to say, what? We'd better do something about it, don't you think?'

'I don't like interfering, old boy. Never pays to interfere.'

'Perhaps you're right, Frank, perhaps you're right. Worryin' business, though, don't you think? Damn good fellows, both of them. Let's hope it'll all come out in the wash, as they say, what?'

'I hope so,' Frank Stuart said. 'I doubt if it will, though,' he thought, remembering those hot brown eyes in Toby's haggard face. 'Oh, blast all women!' he thought suddenly. 'Come up, you ugly brute,' he said, lashing his camel under the belly with his quirt. The camel roared and stretched its neck and plunged forward into the rising sun. It was some time before the rest of the party could catch him up again.

Half an hour after dark that night there was a sudden uproar in the camp. A roaring and bubbling of camels mingled with the shouting of excited men. Toby did not pay much attention to the noise at first. He was sitting in his room, playing his gramophone. The gramophone was pretty old, and a lot of sand had got into the works, so it ran rather jerkily. All the records were over a year old, too, and they reminded him of something which he had been trying for nearly a month to forget. But even that was better than that whispering silence. A man couldn't go on sitting indefinitely in a whispering silence. It was terrible, though, the way those old tunes brought back memories. Oh, God, to have those lovely days again, he thought with a sudden great longing. But those days were dead and gone. That chord would never more be sounded, never more be sounded. Only the echoes of its beauty would ring for ever in his heart.

'No matter where I go, my heart will be with you,
No matter where you are, I'll always worship you'

the gramophone sang.

'Worship you, worship you, worship you,' it went on, the needle stuck in a worn groove. Toby got up and turned the gramophone off.

Outside the noise grew suddenly louder, the wailing of women now added to the sounds of the men and beasts. Toby listened for a few moments and then went out towards the camel lines. When he was close to the hangar he saw Frank Stuart and Joe Gaddesby coming towards him. Frank had something white around his head. He was leaning rather heavily on Joe's shoulder, Toby noticed. When they came nearer he saw that the white

thing around Frank's head was a bandage, and that it was stained dark at one side.

'What's happened?' Toby asked.

'Abdullah Khan's outfit. Attacked us while we were restin'. Came out of a wadi and started loosin' off before we could turn round. About eighty of the swine. Had to make a runnin' fight of it to get away; they chased us for five miles,' Joe said. 'They got seven of our fellows, though,' he added.

'Are you all right, Frank?' Toby asked.

'Yes, I'm all right; it's only a scalp wound. I've lost rather a lot of blood, that's all.'

His voice was rather weak. Toby looked at him hard and saw that one side of his tunic was stained dark, like the bandage. His face was very pale in the starlight.

Just before they reached the fort the doctor came running up, with the medical orderly who had been sent to fetch him a yard or two behind.

'Been walking by the sea. . . . Just heard the news. . . . Came as quickly as I could,' he said between gasps.

'Come inside. . . . Let's take a look at you,' he went on, gasping. He smoked too much, that was his trouble.

The medical orderly came up to Frank and put his arm around his waist.

'Lean on my shoulder, sir,' he said. They followed the doctor into the fort.

A lot of other people had appeared now, all asking questions at the same time.

'We'll get Abdullah Khan for this. He's had it coming to him for a long time,' Toby said to somebody on his right. He looked round after a moment, wondering why whoever it was did not answer. It was Bill. He was staring at Toby coldly, with his lips set in a hard line. A hell of a good-looking fellow in spite of that, Toby thought, and loathed him for it. It made him furiously angry suddenly that a man who had done what Bill had done to him should have the infernal insolence to look him in the face. The damned skunk, smashing up my life and not having the common decency to look ashamed, he thought. He didn't think of Rosemary at all. There was only he and Bill in the whole world, standing facing each other in the starlight with his smashed life between them. He drew his arm back quickly to strike, watching Bill's expression change and seeing him step

backwards, surprised and startled. Somebody took him by the arm and tugged at it, so that he overbalanced and would have fallen if the hand holding his arm had not tightened its grip.

'What the hell,' he said.

'Sorry, Toby. But the old man wants to see you. Very urgent,' Joe Gaddesby said in his drawling voice.

Toby took his handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his face. The handkerchief was quite wet when he had finished. He was trembling, and he felt very flat, suddenly. He looked at Joe.

'Oh, all right,' he said.

They started to walk towards the main gate of the fort, under the square, battlemented tower. But when they had gone a few yards Joe touched his arm and stopped.

'Hold hard a minute, Toby. The old man does want to see you, but it isn't as urgent as all that. I only said that to stop you startin' a rough house,' he said. He fumbled in the breast pocket of his tunic and took out his cigarette-case.

'Have a cigarette. Good for the nerves,' he said, holding it out to Toby. They both took a cigarette. Joe held a match to Toby's and then lit his own. He looked at Toby gravely in the light from the match, his lean face dark and serious. He held the match until it had burnt down almost to his fingers, then flicked it away with his thumb. It was very dark for a few moments after the match had gone out.

'I say, Toby, don't want to interfere, old chap, but what's it all about?' Joe asked suddenly.

'What's what all about?'

'You and Bill. Snarlin' at one another.'

'He's a damned skunk.'

Joe tugged at his short moustache, kicking the sand with one of his riding-boots.

'Don't know about that,' he said, kicking at the sand. He looked up at Toby. 'But I say, doesn't do, officers brawlin' in front of the men. Bad example, I mean to say, what?'

'I suppose so.'

'Bad for discipline, I mean. Must maintain discipline at all costs, what?'

'Oh, yes, of course. Let's have discipline, by all means. Ha! Ha!'

'Be serious, old boy, for God's sake. Damned serious business, what?'

'Of course it's serious. Serious as hell. I'm serious all right.'

'That's fine. Knew you'd understand. Ought not to interfere, I know. But hate to see old friends quarrellin'. Depressin', I mean to say; what? Bad enough at Home, but worse out here. Tryin' place, what?'

'Thanks, Joe. Damn good of you to bother, but you don't quite understand,' Toby said. He looked up for a moment at the blaze of stars, diamond-bright against the velvet blackness of the sky. Then he turned round and went into the fort.

Colonel Fanshawe looked up from the map he was studying when Toby came into his room. There was a green-shaded electric lamp on the table, which shone on his bony face, seamed and wrinkled by half a lifetime spent under tropical suns, and on his greying hair and moustache. All the rest of the room was in shadow. Toby stood just inside the door and saluted.

'Who's that?' the Colonel said, peering at the door. 'Oh, it's you, Quin. Come in. Sit down.' He waved his hand at the chair opposite his own. He was in his shirt-sleeves, with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He pushed a box of cigarettes towards Toby, and started to fill a pipe.

'Bad business this evening, Quin,' he said.

'Yes, sir. We'll have to get that fellow.'

'You're quite right, we shall. The whole zone'll get out of hand unless we do. Now that's your job. Pity there's no moon; you might have got after him now. But it's too dark; you wouldn't see anything. You'll have to wait till morning. Get off as soon as it's light. Take two machines. That'll leave one here in reserve. Wireless the camp if you need it.'

'Yes, sir.'

Colonel Fanshawe held a match to his pipe, pressing the tobacco down with a brown, bony forefinger.

'This is the place I think he'll make for. I've reason to believe it's his headquarters. Come round here; I'll show you. Do you know those ruins there, with the old Arab burial-ground?' he asked, putting his finger on the map.

'Yes, sir, I know the place you mean.'

'Well, I think you'll find him there. And get Abdullah Khan himself, whatever you do. You can't mistake him; he always wears a blue burnous. Report to me as soon as you get back.'

'Very good, sir.'

'All right, Quin. Good night.'

'Good night, sir.'

'Oh, Quin.'

'Yes, sir?'

'You're looking a bit under the weather. You'd better take a fortnight's leave in the island next time the boat comes in.'

'Thank you very much, sir, but I honestly don't need it. I'm all right.'

'Well, we'll discuss it later. Good night.'

'Good night, sir.'

Colonel Fanshawe leaned back in his chair and pulled deeply on his old briar pipe. . . . Poor Quin. Poor boy, poor damned young fool. . . . Old memories came back to him as he sat there, like visions in the smoke. . . . Himself at thirty; another damned young fool. . . . Mary. . . . Jack Fortescue. . . . Well, he'd got over it. All fret and fever, all that fierce misery and bitterness had long since passed away. . . . He'd had his job. It was a fine job; he loved it. And he'd had the men under him. They'd liked him, he thought. Had been fond of him, even. Fine boys, most of them. Grand boys. . . . Yes, he'd been very lucky, on the whole. . . . He'd certainly got over that business all right. One got over everything, in time. . . . Well, more or less, anyway. . . . His pipe had gone out. He struck a match and lit it again, pressing the tobacco down with a brown, bony forefinger. . . . Good days, good days. Ah, Mary, my dear. . . . He leaned forward and went on studying the map.

Toby's servant waked him just before dawn. He had slept very badly and when he got out of bed he staggered a little as though he were drunk. 'This can't go on,' he thought, but he felt how futile it was to think that, when he did not know how to stop it going on. After he had shaved he got into his small canvas bath and sat down. The soap would not lather properly, for some reason or other. Toby looked at the water and then at his servant.

'The refining plant's gone wrong, sir; it's plain sea water,' his servant told him.

'God, what a life,' Toby thought. He was so exasperated by this small thing that he wanted to get out of the bath and break everything in his room. But he knew that he would only be sorry afterwards if he did. His servant would think it rather odd, too, he thought. He washed as well as he could and then got the man to pour a jug of cold water over him. That cleared his head

and when he had rubbed himself down with a rough towel he felt much less tired. After he had dressed he drank a cup of coffee and ate a couple of biscuits. All the time it was growing lighter, and when he went outside he saw the rim of the sun just appearing above the horizon. One of the aeroplanes was already out on the aerodrome with a mechanic sitting in the cockpit. Another mechanic was standing on a small pair of steps on the far side of the machine, turning a handle in the rear end of the engine cowling. As he turned the handle the airscrew turned too, very slowly and jerkily. Suddenly it became a blur, and a moment later Toby heard the murmur of the idling engine. The second mechanic took the handle out of the cowling and jumped down off the steps. He started to drag them towards the other machine, which had been towed out by the caterpillar tractor and was now in position alongside the first. Bill Fedamore was talking to the flight sergeant a few yards away. The whole scene was clear cut and sharp in outline, with long black shadows cast by the rising sun.

Toby watched Bill Fedamore as he walked towards the aerodrome. Bill was wearing his flying topee, with the chin strap unfastened so that the ear flaps hung straight down away from his flat brown cheeks. All the time he was talking to the flight sergeant he was smiling, and once he laughed. Toby could hear his laugh quite clearly as he approached. He clenched his fists and thought how wonderful it would be if Bill should drop dead as he watched him. But skunks like that always went on living, he thought. When Bill looked round and saw Toby coming he stopped smiling and his face became cold and hard. There was a dried spot of blood on his chin where he had cut himself shaving, Toby noticed.

'Good morning, flight sergeant. Everything all right?' he asked.

'Yes, sir.'

'Bombs? Yes, I see they're all right. Ammunition? Emergency rations?'

'Everything's correct, sir.'

'All right. Mister Fedamore, a word with you.' He was pleased with the way he was controlling his voice. It sounded quite natural, to his ears. The ends of discipline were certainly being served all right, he thought. You had to have discipline, even in Hell. He smiled at Bill as they walked a few yards away from the machines. That wasn't so easy, though.

'I hope we'll catch these fellows before they make that ruined village. Then you know the idea. Bomb them while they stick together, shoot them when they scatter,' he was saying. 'You damned, treacherous skunk,' he thought.

'I see,' Bill said. His face was without expression, a little bored, if anything.

'I'll get even with you some day, God damn your soul,' Toby thought. 'Well, let's get off, shall we?' he said.

When they had run their engines up Toby taxied his machine forward a short way to let Bill get into position for a formation take-off. Then he opened his throttle wide. The loaded machines took a fairly long run before they left the ground. At about three hundred feet Toby levelled off and swung around to the left, back over the fort. The courtyard was still in shadow and as he passed over it he could see the white faces of the sentries looking up at him. He looked up to the right and saw Bill's machine above him banked steeply like his own with its wheels still going round and Bill and his air gunner looking down at him with the sun glinting on their goggles. Then he straightened out and set a course for the ruined village.

The sun was above the horizon now, and the broad golden path which its rays had made across the desert earlier had gone. Toby watched the sand in the far distance sparkling like gold dust in the sunlight and tried to keep his thoughts on this and nothing else. After they had been flying for a few minutes he heard a sudden rat-tat-tat-tat behind him and the sound made him jump because dreaming of other days he had almost forgotten where he was. He looked round at his air gunner and the man smiled and patted his Lewis gun to show that he had been testing it. Toby turned round again and fired a short burst through both his guns to make sure that they were working all right. The air gunner tapped him on the shoulder and when he turned his head pointed at the ground a little way in front. Toby looked where he was pointing and saw several objects grouped close together, dark against the sand and with a suggestion of movement amongst them. He dived down towards the group and then flattened out so as to pass over it at about twenty feet. He saw torn white rags fluttering on some of the objects and knew that they were Arab soldiers who had been killed in the fight the evening before. When he was still some yards away half a dozen vultures left the bodies of the Arab soldiers and the dead camels and soared into

the air. They were so gorged that they could hardly fly and rose so slowly that Toby nearly hit one of them with his airscrew. He heard the Lewis gun behind him and saw the wings of one of the vultures on his left fold up and the filthy creature drop like a stone and then the little spurt of sand when it hit the ground.

The wadi where Abdullah Khan's men had hidden streaked past under his wheels. He started to climb again, looking to his right and seeing Bill's head turned towards him. His goggles were around his neck and Toby could see his face very clearly with the sun shining on it. His eyes were screwed up a little against the glare of the sun and the slipstream and his lips were tightly compressed. When he saw Toby looking at him he jerked his thumb over his shoulder and nodded his head several times in a grim sort of way. Toby stared at him for a moment or two, not taking any notice of his nodding. Then he glanced down at the row of bombs in their racks under Bill's bottom planes and then at the wheels of his machine. They were rotating backwards very slowly.

At five hundred feet he levelled off again. It was getting pretty hot now and he wound the tropical radiator out as far as it would go. That made the cockpit a bit cooler, but he could feel his face wet with sweat where the sun caught it through the windscreen. Every now and again he glanced at his map and then at the ground and tried to check the course from some feature on that almost featureless expanse. And then he would look at Bill's machine and see it rising and falling in the hot, bumpy air and watch its wheels turning slowly backwards. Sometimes the two machines would be perfectly level horizontally and then one or both of them would hit a bump and one would go up a little above or down a little below the other as if they were attached to opposite ends of a see-saw with a short, invisible beam. They would come together again slowly and be perfectly level again for a while, and if you did not look at the ground you might think that they were motionless in space, suspended from the pale-blue dome of the sky. But that illusion would not last long because another bump would come and you would know that you were on the move, all right.

Toby looked at his watch and saw that they had been in the air for over forty minutes. He knew that they must have travelled about eighty miles and that the village could not be more than thirty miles away. He looked down at the ground and saw patches

of scrub and camel thorn scattered here and there. There was a glare from the sun which made it difficult to see very far directly ahead. He looked all round; nothing seemed to be stirring in that yellow waste. But after about five minutes he saw, away to the north-east, a long way off, a moving column like a brownish snake against the lighter background of sand. He moved the stick fairly quickly from side to side two or three times and then turned towards the target, opening his throttle and putting his nose down a little to save time. A minute later he could pick out the individual figures quite plainly, more bunched together now as the tail end of the column galloped to catch up the leaders. He put his nose down farther and dived at the centre of the band, seeing the flying white burnouses and the small puffs of sand from the camels' tearing feet. At fifty feet he pulled his port bomb toggle quickly twice. He climbed steeply, and at the top of his climb stalled-turned to attack from the opposite side. He saw a cloud of smoke almost hiding the column and above the smoke Bill's machine diving down at right angles to his own path. He saw Bill start to pull out of his dive and at the same moment two fat white objects detach themselves from one of his lower planes and hurtle downwards in a forward curve and then a terrific disturbance somewhere under the swirling smoke and then the smoke itself thicker than before. He thought how easy it would be to get a burst in on Bill's engine or even on his cockpit as he dived across him so that he would have to land and perhaps be captured and tortured to death or crash and be killed outright and either of these things no more than a skunk like him deserved. But it would be tough on the air gunner who hadn't done anything, he thought. All this time he was diving towards the smoke cloud and Bill's machine was out of range now and now he was in the same piece of air that Bill's machine had occupied a few seconds before. He let go a couple of bombs, from the starboard rack this time, and pulled up in a steep zoom.

At the top of the zoom he stalled-turned back again for his third attack, expecting to see Bill diving across him for his second. But he could not see Bill at first. He saw the thick white smoke cloud drifting towards him on the wind, and dimly at its thinning centre a chaotic heap of men and camels without movement, and beyond its ragged ends dismounted figures dotted amongst the scrub with puffs of smoke coming from the rifles in their hands. It only wanted Bill's machine to complete the picture, but he

could not see it. He looked sharply to the right and then he saw it, gliding into wind with its airscrew revolving slowly and blue smoke pouring from the engine cowling. Toby pulled out of his dive into a climbing turn, watching Bill's machine as it glided down to land.

Bill made a good slow landing on that tricky ground, and did not run very far. Toby saw the airscrew stop revolving. Bill and the air gunner started to get out of the machine. They would have been an easy target sitting in it. There was a flash and a puff of smoke from a clump of camel thorn about forty yards away and the air gunner fell backwards off the step and lay very still. Bill jumped down to the ground and bent over him. There was another flash and puff of smoke from the same clump of camel thorn and he spun round and then fell forward on top of the air gunner. After a moment or two he got to his feet again and began to move forward with his body bent double towards the nearest patch of scrub. It was not more than ten yards off but before he had gone half that distance there was a flash and a puff of smoke and he fell forward on to his face. This time he did not get up, but he seemed to be moving a little.

All this only took a few seconds and Toby watched it as he might have watched a scene in a play. There was an unreal quality about the yellow sand and the pale-blue sky and the two figures by the machine and the puffs of smoke from the Arab rifles. Perhaps this was because he could not hear anything above the noise of his engine. When he saw the air gunner fall he felt nothing, but when he saw Bill fall his heart leapt inside him with a sudden sickening pain which he thought was joy and then he felt only a blind fury. He dived at the patch of camel thorn where the shots had come from with his thumbs pressing the gun controls and seeing the scrub shaking and the sand flying in the hail of bullets. There were other puffs of smoke away to the left and he pulled the machine round towards them and dived on them in turn, not thinking about giving his air gunner a chance to do some shooting but hearing the Lewis gun behind him sometimes as he turned after a dive. All the time his main feeling was one of blind fury, but behind this he kept thinking of Bill lying there wounded and perhaps dying or even dead by now and of all the years they had known each other and all the things they had done and seen together. And he thought what a fine and loyal friend Bill had always been and how he deserved happiness more

than most men and yet when he had found it he himself had grudged it to him and even wished him dead. 'Oh, God, don't let him die, don't let him die,' he said.

At last when he looked down he could not see any movement on the ground below. He throttled back and glided in to land. Thinking of Bill he landed rather fast and then pulled up so quickly on the soft sand that he thought the machine was going up on to its nose. As it was the tail lifted about two feet, but it fell back again and he stopped almost abreast of Bill's machine.

'Stay here, Moss, and keep a good look out. Shoot if you see anything move,' he said to the air gunner.

'Yes, sir,' Moss answered. He looked very hot and anxious. Toby got out of the machine and started to run. As he passed Bill's machine he glanced at it and saw the underside of the engine cowlings and the struts of the undercarriage all black with oil from the smashed oil pipe, and the small hole at the rear of the cowlings where the bullet had gone in. The dead air gunner was lying on his back where he had fallen, with his eyes wide open and his lips parted a little as though he were about to speak. His topee had fallen off and one side of his hair and the sand below it were stained a dark red.

When Toby got to Bill he thought that he was dead, too, at first. He was lying face downwards with his legs drawn up towards his body and his arms stretched out in front of him with his fingers clutching the sand. Toby turned him over very gently, seeing the sand stained dark red where his chest and shoulder had lain, and his grey face with the eyelids closed and bluish looking and beads of sweat on his forehead. And he saw the little spot of dried blood on his chin where he had cut himself shaving that morning and somehow that tiny cut seemed the worst wound of all. Toby was certain he was dead because he did not seem to be breathing at all, but suddenly he saw his eyelids flicker. He put his hands under his arms and dragged him under the wing of the machine, where there was some shade. He got out a flask of brandy and put his arm under Bill's head to raise it a little and forced the neck of the flask between his teeth and tilted it. Most of the brandy spilled down his chin, but some of it went down his throat all right. After a moment he quivered and then his eyes opened slowly and he stared at Toby.

'Toby,' he said. His voice was so low that Toby could hardly hear it.

'You're all right, Bill. You're going to be all right.'

'Rosemary. . . . Forgive. . . .'

There was a bright-red froth of blood on his lips. Toby took out his handkerchief and wiped it away.

'Listen, Bill. Can you hear me? There's nothing to forgive. Nothing, do you understand? We couldn't help it, Bill. . . . Bill, don't die; you mustn't die. Oh, God, please don't let him die. I know I wanted him dead, but I didn't mean it; please don't let him die. Bill, don't die. . . . Bill! . . .'

The hot wind blew a sudden cloud of sand into the air, stinging his face and hands like small shot. His eyes were watering so much that he could scarcely see. 'It's the sand in my eyes,' he thought, 'it's only the sand.' He knelt in the shade of the aeroplane wing, with Bill's body in his arms.

SNAKE'S HEAD MEADOW.

HALF a mile from the tram, beyond the hoardings—

'Buy British!' 'Eat More!' 'Stop—look—listen!'—

Down that deserted lane is Snake's Head Meadow

Where the fritillaries grow. The red rifts glisten

Like dragons' blood in the grass. Each chequered head

Bears the light pencilling of immortal fingers—

Touch them warily! Half a mile from the tram

Or a thousand ages?

In Snake's Head Meadow magic lingers—

That snake whose convolutions curled

About the pivot of the world

Could pull the trams and hoardings down

And set the chequered flowers to wave

Above the town's forgotten grave.

FREDA C. BOND.

THE RUNNING BROOKS.

Puppets into Scotland : Walter Wilkinson (Bles, 5s. n.).

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dickens : His Letters to Her : (Constable, 10s. n.).

The Air Is Our Concern : Nigel Tangye (Methuen, 6s. n.).

Clear-Water Trout Fishing with Worm : Sidney Spencer (Witherby, 5s. n.).

Myrtles and Mice : Leaves from the Italian Diary of Cordelia Gundolf (Murray, 5s. n.).

Road of Ages : Robert Nathan (Constable, 7s. 6d. n.).

Jagged Skyline : Mary Dunstan (Constable, 7s. 6d. n.).

Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra : Mary Butts (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. n.).

Last Days with Cleopatra : Jack Lindsay (Nicholson & Watson, 8s. 6d. n.).

MR. WALTER WILKINSON is fast becoming an institution. Every year there must be an increasing number of people who look eagerly forward to reading the tale of his last summer's travels and adventures with the barrow containing the puppet-show and all the impedimenta of a life under high heaven, told with whimsical delicacy and humour. Last summer, accompanied by his wife, he pushed the *Puppets into Scotland*, and now we can cosily and happily share his days spent in the charm and rain and beauty of the Border country and beyond. Perhaps, feeling that variety is the salt of life and therefore of literature, he has of set intention dwelt less upon the puppets themselves than in earlier books: that, let us assure him, is his readers' loss. We are not tired of the puppets and would fain hear more of them. Here they perform and we have an occasional comment upon the performance from the lips of a child or rustic, but they are kept in the background, and to one reader at least that is a pity. In their stead we have fuller descriptions of scenes and travel, written with a discerning eye and a poetic pen. But can it be that Mr. Wilkinson is growing up? He stays under roofs more often than he did and once at any rate fell into temptation and took an excursion by motor-bus. We beg him to stay young for ever. And let him too beware of his increasing dislike of all that is an unavoidable part of modern civilisation. Not long since his dislike was whimsical, now it is beginning to have an acid edge, and acidity and the puppets must surely always be strangers. Yet, at all times and in all moods, Mr. Wilkinson and his companions remain a perpetual delight:

may he push them along the country roads and tell us of the pushings and chance encounters for many a year to come.

The letters which make up the volume *Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dickens* are here, except for some scattered fragments, published for the first time. Passing into the hands of Mrs. Dickens's second daughter, Kate Perugini, they were entrusted by her to the authorities of the British Museum with instructions that publication was to be delayed until after her death and that of her brother, Sir Henry Fielding Dickens. Their recipient's own wish that they should in due course be made public in order that the world might know that her husband had once loved her is now fulfilled in a double, and pathetic, sense. For, though they reveal nothing new as to the cause which led husband and wife to separate after twenty-two years of marriage and the birth of eleven children, they do show Dickens as an ardent, if extremely dictatorial, lover. One reason for the rift is, however, implied from the very beginning—the conflict between the claims made upon his time by his fiancée and the exigencies of journalistic work. The picture is necessarily one-sided. But it is absorbing in its revelation of the man himself—an egotist justified by genius, at any rate in his own eyes—and the vigour and colour of its drawing.

It would be difficult to suggest a more apt or topical title than that which Mr. Nigel Tangye has chosen for his 'Critical Study of England's Future in Aviation.' Nationally and individually, *The Air Is Our Concern*, a fact which emerges with drastic conclusiveness from these authoritative pages by a number of experts each one of whom is 'best qualified to write upon his own particular branch of aviation.' And since 'contemporary aviation problems as they affect the British Empire' cannot, in the nature of things, be reasonably considered in the light of patriotism alone, Mr. Tangye has, most wisely and usefully, included contributions from America, Germany, and France with those of British representatives.

Mr. Sidney Spencer's *Clear-Water Trout Fishing with Worm* should do a great deal to destroy the idea still existing in some quarters that worm fishing is 'an easy way of murdering trout, and therefore unsportsmanlike,' for it is an admirably concise and lucid exposition of the mysteries of a type of fishing which is in a class by itself. As such it is, perhaps, more likely to interest the expert than the beginner. Yet even the novice must admit that 'success in trout fishing, whatever the method, comes most readily from knowledge of the fish, their habits and ways, and of the places

where they may be found.' This admission once made, he will be quick to recognise the value of this study of a branch of the trout fisher's art that teaches, 'as no other can, the ways of the trout.'

Dr. Axel Munthe is the literary sponsor of *Myrles and Mice*, for it is owing to his encouragement that these charming 'Leaves from the Italian Diary' of his youthful German neighbour, Cordelia Gundolf, now see the light in the translation of Mr. R. W. Reynolds. It is almost impossible not to apply the adjective 'precocious' to the work of so young an author—the diaries from which the book is composed were written between the ages of ten and fifteen. But in this case the word is robbed of its objectionable implications by the freshness and spontaneity of the impressions here recorded. This child is in touch with beauty; she has an eye for colour, a sense of design in the arrangement of words. In these glowing, intimate vignettes of Rome, Ravello, Positano, and, most of all, of Capri, there is promise of a rich maturity.

Mr. Robert Nathan's task in *Road of Ages* is one of such complexity that only a master of words, a writer of quick, even profound, imagination could have infused this fantasy of vast dimensions with such limpid simplicity, pity, and beauty. 'The Jews were going into exile.' It is a theme as old as time, as topical as a daily newspaper. Across the face of an indifferent or inimical Europe streams the endless caravan from all nations under heaven who 'are not wanted in the world,' their goal the Gobi Desert, their one remaining sanctuary. New life is ahead of them; death is in their midst, the tool of enemies, of disease, of old age, of themselves. The delicate strength of Mr. Nathan's style, the wideness of his sympathy, the tolerance and shrewdness of his humour have made this parable told in terms of a novel something which is not easily forgotten.

Miss Mary Dunstan's *Jagged Skyline* has a dual interest in setting and characterisation. Staged among the Swiss Alps, the story of Martin Steyne—ultra-sophisticated, 'the perfect dilettante,' successful lover of a world-famous *prima donna*—and Michel Jost—simple, conscientious, supposed descendant of a long line of mountain guides, in reality the natural son of Martin's father—is worked out with considerable dramatic effect, chiefly because the author succeeds in suggesting intellectual and spiritual forces in conflict against a background which is at once the antithesis of one and the complement of the other. The book too has good pictorial qualities; its mountain atmosphere in which Nonne, the great peak, wields

its inalienable power of life and death is skilfully created. Properly handled, it would make an excellent film.

Miss Mary Butts has accomplished something considerably more than a *tour de force* in her modernistic reconstruction of *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*. And if her determination to present her central character pre-eminently as goddess, wife, and mother robs Cleopatra of much of the glamour attached—perhaps ironically—to wantonness and wickedness, the resulting picture is in a way more poignant because more human. That Miss Butts has made an exhaustive study of her subject is indisputable; moreover, she writes with a fine sense of poetic and dramatic values. The framework of the book too is admirably adapted to her purpose. Sometimes actual happenings pass before us; at others the author employs the method of dramatic narration in the form of letters; at others again we stand beside an onlooker, as when Cornelia, wife of Pompey, helpless in her ship, must watch the murder of her husband on the beach.

Miss Butts leaves off before the defeat at Actium. Mr. Jack Lindsay's *Last Days with Cleopatra* begins shortly after it. In this case it is the subsidiary, unhistorical characters who form the connecting narrative thread—the love-story of the slave, Victor, and the Greek girl, Daphne—a device which sharpens the perspective of history by crystallising the struggle of individuals 'to realise their small lives as the universe.' This novel completes the trilogy of which the earlier volumes were *Rome for Sale* and *Cæsar Is Dead*. It is, however, complete in itself without reference to its forerunners—a virile, deeply interesting book, over-sensuous, on occasion, perhaps for some tastes; scarred with high tragedy; symbolic; brilliant in description; almost cinematic in scope and movement, and bearing on nearly every page the imprint of wide scholarship.

M. E. N.

THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 142.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic, below, whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must contain the *Coupon* from page iv of the preliminary pages of this issue. They must reach the Editor by 30th August.

'The sheen of the far-surrounding seas
And islands that were the Hesperides
Of all my ————'

1. 'The rose as where some buried Cæsar ———'
2. '——— the brink of it
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man!'
3. 'that is all
——— know on earth, and all ——— need to know.'
4. 'Thence to behold this new created world,
The addition of this empire, how it showed
In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair
Answering his great ———'
5. 'Thou on whose ———, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,'
6. 'The lark now leaves ——— wat'ry nest.'

Answer to Acrostic 140, June issue: '*Surely I dream'd to-day, or did I see the winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?*' (Keats: '*Ode to Psyche*'). 1. *SwarD* (Keats: '*Ode to Maia*'). 2. *UndeR* (R. L. Stevenson: '*Requiem*'). 3. *ReposE* (Shelley: '*Remorse*'). 4. *EvA* ('*Medieval Hymn to the Virgin*'). 5. *LooM* (Tennyson: '*Lady of Shalott*'). 6. *YielD* (Gray's '*Elegy*').

The first correct answers opened were sent by Miss F. Simpson, 3 Southend Gardens, Whitby, and Miss J. N. McNeill, Charlotte Street, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. These two solvers are invited to choose books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue.

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